Royal manuscript

Jerry Siegel
11928 Darlington Avenue, Apt. 102
Los Angeles, California 90049
(213) 820-2492

CREATION OF A SUPERHERO

By Jerry Siegel

PREFACE

I am the writer who originated the idea of doing an adventure comic strip about a character I decided to name "Superman". Then I wrote script for it.

Through the years, various people have asked me to reveal how "Superman" was really created. Does the information which has already been printed on this subject tell the full story?

No.

Others have suggested I write my autobiography and tell the real story about how "Superman" was created and after years of struggle finally was printed and became successful.

This book was written in response to those requests in the hope that it will straighten out some misconceptions and be of interest to "Superman" fans who would like to know the evolution of the "Superman" character.

Chapter One

THE ROAD TO [illegible]

One of my earliest recollections of me, in my infancy, is of myself seated in the dirt driveway of the front yard of the house I lived in. I was enjoying myself immensely, making mud pies. It was so very soul-satisfying to take that damp dirt and lovingly create an object of sheer delight out of mere dust.

But a dark cloud hung menacingly above my youthful head, a cloud that boded ill for this infantile fling at creativity. It was a cloud of GUILT. I knew that I was indulging in a forbidden pleasure. My mother had firmly admonished me not to play in the dirt, like this, again.

This creative ecstacy, I knew, could very well culminate in a severe spanking.

My slightly older brother Leo approached me and he said, "Hey! You were told not to do that!"

I was well aware of that. But my compulsion to make mud pies refused to be denied. Though doom might lurk around the corner, oh what fun I was having now!

Suddenly, my enjoyment was replaced by stark terror.

My mother was approaching.

I had sinned. I was about to be unmasked as the Miscreant of All Time! But ... if I could conceal the damning evidence of my youthful misbehavior, perhaps I could escape getting my rear end whacked.

But how? How? My feverish little brain concocted a cunning subterfuge.

Conceal the evidence!

Hastily, I crammed the mud pie into my mouth. Then I tried to look not only inscrutable, but innocent.

However, the dirt tasted awful. I began spitting it out, and crying.

"Why did you do that." asked my surprised mother.

I cried some more. Why bother to explain. No adult could possibly understand the complexity and hysteria which had motivated my seemingly enigmatic behavior.

I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on October 17, 1914. My parents were Michael and Sarah. He was a tailor, and he had his own store. I recall him as being a very quiet, hard-working man. My mother took an interest in good causes, and she was on a committee at an orphanage. I recall her as being courageous, of very good character, and she very much wanted her children to have good lives. I had two brothers, Harry and Leo. And three sisters, Minerva, Roslyn and Isabel.

My memories of my childhood are dim, as though fate had retroactively erased much of the recollections. But I do remember one day when I was very, very young. My brother Leo and I wore identical extremely white brand new little garments. I was horribly uncomfortable in that tight, white outfit, but I was happy. Happy! We were going to be taken to a photographer to be photographed together in those white, tight garments. How eager I was about it all.

I will never know why, but there was a mystifying change of plan. I was told that I could not come along to the photographic studio. Only my brother would go to the exciting event.

Heartbroken, I cried as loudly as I could in that white, tight damnably uncomfortable garment. Despair, sadness, misery engulfed me. Why. Why?

Still another memory oozes through the fog of decaying, submerged memories. Pint-sized, I would joyfully sit on a leg of my seated father. We would grasp hands, and I would eagerly anticipate what was to come next. He would boost me up and down, up and down in the air, raising and lowering his leg and me with it. Up, down! Up, down! I felt like I was flying! Oh, what supreme rapture! To fly, to fly, to fly! What bliss!

When I was very small, my favorite sport was sliding down the steps of a steep

stairway in my house, on my rear-end. Blummp ... blummp ... blummp. It didn't hurt at all. I felt like I was sailing, flying. What pleasure!

One day I stopped those wildly bumpeting descents, because I finally banged my butt so that it hurt. No more did I fly down the stairway. Like the rest of the human race, I walked down stairs.

Another early recollection.

I was in kindergarten, making sketches like the other youngsters. How earnestly I labored. Wandering in and out among the busy children, the teacher smiled and nodded approvingly, tossing compliments around like she had an endless supply of them.

Then her eyes fastened on what I had lovingly created. The pleasant smile faded off her features. She frowned and shook her head disapprovingly.

Where had I failed???

I was in another classroom, perhaps in the first grade. A classmate lifted his hand, and asked to be permitted to go to the boys' room.

Minutes later, a girl was similarly given permission to leave the room.

In a little while, I felt a sensation which warned that I, too, had better visit the lavatory facilities pronto.

I raised my hand. The gesture was ignored. I kept raising it again and again.

"What do you want?" the teacher demanded.

I told her.

"No," she replied. "You may not leave the room."

Perhaps she assumed that because I had seen the other kids leave the class room to go to the lavatories, I had struck upon a cunning stratagem. Maybe she suspiciously decided that deviously, I was pretending I needed to go to the boys' room ... in order to escape from the classroom.

I was dismayed by her refusal. How come others were allowed to relieve themselves. Why not me, too? Why was I being discriminated against?

My bladder seemed to swell bigger and bigger. Agonizingly so.

I raised my hand again, and the teacher shouted at me to lower it.

I fought the inevitable. But despite herculean effort, a bigger and bigger puddle began forming on the floor beneath my seat.

Seated around me, other children began to exclaim and laugh and point at me.

The teacher descended on me like a shrieking demon. "You are a bad, bad, bad, bad boy! Bad and disgusting! Leave the room, this very instant! Go home! Get out, you horrid boy!" She dragged and shoved me out of the room.

I departed, crying.

When I told my mother what had happened, she wrathfully took me back to school. She angrily told the teacher that it had been mean of her not to allow me to go to the boys' room, and that it was the teacher, not me, who was guilty of wrongdoing.

At an early age I got a taste of how it feels to be victimized. Many years later I learned that it is called man's inhumanity to man.

About a year or so later, I sat in a classroom, enjoying a sensation of well-being, because I had a penny in my pocket.

The pleasant euphoria was replaced by a stab of horror when I reached my little hand into the pocket to caress the coin, and found ...nothing. The penny was gone! Maybe I had been taking the penny out, every once in a while, for some fondly surreptitious glances at it, and somehow misplaced it. Whatever actually happened to that penny is lost in the labyrinths of time. But I remember the sharp stab of agonizing loss.

I leaned down, at my seat in the classroom, glancing frantically around. No sight of the penny, no trace of it at all. I was certain that I had lost it somehow, somewhere in the classroom.

When the class ended, I approached the desk of the teacher. Some other students were standing there, each desiring to say something or other to her. She

politely answered their questions. The others wandered off, and I was the only remaining pupil, lingering after the class.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I lost a penny. If you find it, please let me know."

Her eyes bulged, the skin on her face tightened as though someone was standing behind her, pulling at it. Her face twisted into an awful rage. Her adult hand flew forward ... powerful fingers grabbed the loose skin on the front of my neck. She pulled the skin as far forward as it would go and pinched it ferociously, shaking my head violently.

"THAT is what you wanted to ask me?" she shriked. "THAT? THAT? THAT?"

I decided, right there, that to ask a teacher a question, particularly when there were no witnesses around, could be perilous.

For me, school was sometimes a place of terror. From time-to-time, the children would be asked to write a book report, or other composition. This I enjoyed doing. But it was what often what came next which would bring beads of sweat to my brow.

Students would be told to come to the head of the class, face their classmates, and read aloud what they had written.

I would sit nervously, hoping I would not be called upon. When I was told to go up front and read my composition, I felt like each step was taking me closer to the edge of an abyss.

As I raised the sheet before me, my hands would quivver tremulously. My voice would shake... to me, my tortured voice seemed off-key. I would feel faint, ill, frightened.

It seemed to take forever for me to finish reading what I had written. I would go numbly back to my seat, hoping it would be a long, long time before I had to go through another similar ordeal.

Sometimes, to lessen the pain, I would clown around while going through the reading ordeal. The kids laughed. I enjoyed that.

Valentine's Day. The happy occasion when children would write greetings on Valenti

Day cards addressed to classmates. The teacher would collect them cards and then distribute them to happily waiting pupils.

I happily waited, too. Around me, murmurs of joy could be heard from kids who were getting more and more cards handed to them. Brotherhood, friendliness, love enveloped the classroom. It was a place of warm togetherness.

Finally, my name was called. The handwriting on the card that the teacher handed to me with a gentle smile was so beautifully executed that I knew it was the handwriting of an adult ... only the teacher could have written it. I had not received a single valentine card from a classmate. My spine chilled. Jerome the Loner. Jerome the Pariah. Jerome the Siegel.

Next Valentine's Day I did get a card, during the joyous distribution. It was not necessary for the teacher to cushion my feelings by charitably smuggling a card to me. I had sent a card to myself, the outcast. It was not at all really satisfying but who but me ever knew? I had a secret.

School did not enthrall me. I had not the slightest ambition to become a shining scholar. I didn't even care to become a dim scholar. School was for me a horrid place where my body had to be many hours during the day... a place where endless boredom smothered me, where malevolently towering teachers prowled. I know a lot of other kids loved school, and I admired them though I did not share their enthusiasm for the halls of education. I just didn't dig it. Except for the first day of each semester -- gosh, that first day was fun. Kids murmured aloud, laughed. Teachers smiled. Happiness vibrated all over the place. But then, when the grim business of cramming knowledge into one's skull got down to business, interest in arithmetic, geography, etc. just slid off my brain, and oozed into a crack in the floor, where it gradually evaporated.

Failing subjects was dismal. Going to summer school to take the failed subjects all over again was even more dismal. While other kids

enjoyed summer vacation, I had my nose rubbed into education.

Somedays I would skip school ... walk to the school building and just stand there in the schoolyard and watch the other kids enter the building. When the school bell rang, I would wander off, bleakly knowing that I would have to pay for this hideous crime, but revolting against what for me, in those youthful years, was revolting.

Recess, though, was kind of fun, the running, the shouting.

My name, Siegel, sounded like "seagull". I remember, during some recesses, classmates chanting at me, "Siegel, Seagull, bird of an Eagle! Fly, Seagull! Let's see you fly!"

And in my imagination, I did fly. Up... up... and away-yyy...

As much as public school turned me off, the public library turned me on. I spent a great deal of time at the library, reading storybooks, withdrawing some. I loved the atmosphere of a library. I loved the look and feel of books and magazines. Black printing on white paper seemed so neat. The stories in the books were often fascinating. When very young, I remember enjoying picture books about "The Brownies", Pat and other tales of wonder. I like the book illustrations, especially if they were cartoons.

In my home, one day, I tripped and tumbled head over heels down the steep cellar stairs, over and over, unable to halt the fall. For days, my nose and the top of my head hurt. Did I damage my nose? Did I injure my brain? Only The Shadow knows!

One of my more pleasant early recollections is of the newspaper funnies. How I loved "Little Nemo", "Mutt and Jeff", and "The Katzenjammer Kids". They enchanted and utterly fascinated me.

Somewhere ~~somehow~~ somehow, I had learned that if you rub a wax candle over printed material, then put a sheet over it and rubbed the sheet with a hard object, that an impression of the printed material would be transferred onto the sheet. I adored the Sunday color comics, and I remember transferring the color cartoons onto sheets of paper, using the wax candle method.

Also, I remember having a toy device... you would look through a small opening into its interior, while you turned a handle on it. There were cartoons inside... of a monkey ... each cartoon showed a progressively additional movement of an action scene. As the pictures were flipped successively by turning the handle, the pictures appeared to move! Animated cartoons! What fun! How I treasured it and enjoyed watching the jerkily moving antics of the cartooned monkey.

In motion picture theaters, animated cartoons I especially enjoyed were "Felix the Cat", and "Out of the Inkwell".

I didn't know it at the time, but someday I would do more than just look at cartoons. I would take part in creating them. One of the cartoon characters I would originate, Superman, was destined to become very famous all over the world.

I don't recall too much about my very early years, but I remember briefly enjoying a very dangerous sport.

At a busy street corner, I would adroitly dash in and out amidst turning, navigating autos. Twisting, darting, leaping, I felt exuberantly invulnerable. Oh, how agilely I narrowly escaped the gaping jaws of death! Those furious humans driving the cars, who yammered and glared insanely at me ... they were mere mortals. But I ... I felt I was a leaping, twirling, gleeful phenomenon! One day, a car slightly grazed me while I was tempting Fate in this manner. The slight impact caused a mild ache. I decided this sport was not for me, anymore.

What made me so foolishly daring?

Maybe the movies. On Saturdays, I would go to a kiddie matinee at a neighborhood motion picture theater. There, amidst the cheering young audience, I would shout as fervently as everyone around me, as I would see depicted on the screen, tales of

mind-dazzling excitement. Brave movie heroes would valiantly surmount incredible dangers and athletically rescue beautiful, imperilled damsels. Tom Mix, with his splendid smile and incredible bravado, was a great favorite of mine.

I particularly enjoyed the movie chapter serials. They abounded with action, thrills, suspense, danger, horrifying dilemmas! The cliff-hanging endings of each chapter always left me in a frenzy of excitement. How would the hero, or heroine, survive such impossible-to-escape death-traps? After a while, I learned that whoever wrote the episodes usually had a sneaky escape trick up his sleeve, but that didn't spoil the fun for me, even if the explanations of the narrow escapes from death were often pretty implausible.

I loved dime-novels. Particularly the stirring adventures of Nick Carter, and Frank and Dick Merriwell! I read all of these I could get my eager hands on. I enthusiastically read hardcover juvenile novels series, such as the Rover Boys and Tom Swift. I read pulp magazines, too. Omnivorously.

I thrilled to Douglas Fairbanks' movies. He was my favorite performer! His joyful exuberance while performing amazing athletic stunts during feats of tremendous valor thrilled me through and through.

I would run ... I would leap ... imagining that like Douglas Fairbanks I could accomplish almost any incredible physical feat.

I would spring over high bushes, exulting. Now I knew how Fairbanks felt while doing astounding stunts.

One day, I climbed atop my backyard garage, carrying an umbrella with great expectation, and resolve. I would perform a truly daring feat.

I would leap [redacted] into space, hurtle down, down, down -- and survive!

I opened the umbrella and leapt. Look out world, here I come! Down I dropped. I felt great. Oh, the triumph of it all! I did this over and over again. Unexpectedly, the umbrella suddenly turned inside-out as I descended. I banged a knee, when I hit the ground.

Just as I had abandoned berserkly dodging in and out between moving automobiles, I gave up jumping off the top of my garage. Reality can hurt, sometimes.

When and how I decided to become a writer, I don't recall. But this, I remember.

In grammar school, a teacher informed the class that anyone who wanted to write for the schoolpaper should raise a hand.

Oh, how I wanted to. I knew I aspired to become a writer, and perhaps be a reporter some day. But I was very shy. I sat there, my heart thumping, and I couldn't summon emough courage to raise my hand.

The children who volunteered left the room for a special meeting. After they had gone, I finally overcame timidity and raised my hand.

"I would like to write for the school paper, too," I said.

The teacher replied, "You should have raised your hand when the others did. Now it's too late."

I felt dejected. Timidity had robbed me of a splendid opportunity to get started doing what I very much wanted to do in life. I had had my great chance, and meek, mild-mannered me had muffed it!

I remember writing my first story ... in longhand. I began writing atop my bed. I don't recall why, but I soon crawled under the bed with the pencil and paper and finished writing the story there. Was it more inspiring beneath the mattress springs? Again, only The Shadow knows!

One day, my older brother Harry brought home a pulp magazine entitled AMAZING STORIES. This profoundly affected my future life. It was a turning point, for me. He let me read it, and I was awed by the astonishing science fiction stories in the publication. I enjoyed them tremendously. How stunningly imaginative... much more so than other types of fiction I had read! Harry also bought WEIRD TALES

magazine, and I immensely enjoyed them, too, thrilling to the shuddery eerie tales. Occasionally, science fiction stories appeared in WEIRD TALES. I also was fascinated by, among others, the pulp magazines "ARGOSY" and "THE SHADOW". "ARGOSY" sometimes printed what they called "scientific romances". I loved them!

I remember reading Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan books and his John Carter of Mars novels. I enjoyed them tremendously and greatly admired Burroughs' vivid imagination and storytelling skill. I thought the action sequences in his stories were fabulous, and like millions of other people I found Tarzan to be astoundingly heroic. I would have been amazed and delighted to know that many years later I would meet Edgar Rice Burroughs in person and that he would congratulate me on the success of my creation, the "SUPERMAN" comic strip. I also thrilled to Sax Rohmer's feverishly dramatic books about the infernally sinister Dr. Fu Manchu.

I had almost no interest in school. My mind, and school learning, just weren't compatible... physically, I would be in a classroom, but my thoughts were light-years away ... on other planets... in worlds within atoms ... off into other than the familiar three dimensions ...I daydreamed about evil scientists crazily scheming to grasp mankind within their hideously relentless claws ... and of undaunted heroes fighting magnificently against the unbelievable, yet achieving impossible goals.

Sometimes, in a classroom, I would look through a window at the fleecy clouds in the sky, visualizing my spirit-self cavorting ecstatically up there...whirling, arcing, rocketing ...

Into my earthly life, bullies would occasionally intrude. Seeing the maniacal fury on their bestial features, I would suddenly feel quite unheroic. But later... ah-hhh ... in my mind's eyes, I would visualize myself ... a cyclonic power-packed instrument of awesome vengeance ... descending upon hordes of cringing bullies with an almost cosmic fury, to their eternal regret. Around earth-bound people, I was usually timid and shy. But on a few occasions, I abandoned this stereotype. Such as when I got tired of being bothered by a bully

who gleefully challenged me to wrestle.

I thought to myself... being scared is ridiculous ... surprise him.

I vigorously exerted the effort I usually reserved for day-dreaming, and in a few seconds I had him pinned helplessly to the ground.

When I let him go, he sputtered in puzzlement, "That must have been an accident. I dare you to wrestle again!"

A second later, I had him helplessly on the ground again and rubbed his face into the dirt. He pleaded to be let go, scurried off, and didn't bother me again.

Another much taller and bulkier fellow then myself sneeringly made a similar challenge. He did it right after I had been daydreaming, probably about Tarzan. I hoisted him overhead, surprising myself, and hurled him through the air.

"Let's try that again," he said, unbelievingly.

Concentrating on speed, I snatched him aloft and threw him off through the air, again.

But mostly, such incidents were confined to my imagination.

In school, I clowned around. I enjoyed making people laugh.

One day, a teacher summoned me before the class. "People don't laugh with you." she said. "They laugh AT you!"

She asked the class to comment on her observation about me.

A girl stood up and indignantly said. "What you have done is one of the cruelest things I have ever seen."

teacher or Jerry?

Yes, school and I were not compatible. At home, I would listen to shocker radio series ... stunned by the eeriness of it all. But I wasn't a fan of only melodrama. I also enjoyed the "Laurel and Hardy" movie comedies.

I recall being very favorably impressed by a movie called "The Golem", about an avenging being who used his awesome strength to crush a tyrant and save

those who were being oppressed. I was enthralled by various other movie shockers such as "The Phantom of the Opera", starring Lon Chaney. I also enjoyed Fritz Lang's movie "Metropolis", and the film "The Lost World".

In writers' trade magazines I read about authors who poured out millions and millions of words for pulp magazines, spinning exciting action tales. This seemed to me to be quite an accomplishment, and I wanted to be like them. I wanted to write millions of action-packed thrillers, too, which people would enjoy reading.

Some of the pulp magazines were featuring glamorous two-fisted heroes who often terrified vermin of the underworld. Those heroes, who sometimes had secret identities, crusaded with fists and guns so that goodness and justice would triumph over black-hearted spawns of evil. I was utterly enchanted by their incredible derring-do.

One day, I took a pulp magazine to junior high school with me, to read in study hall. It was a mistake. The magazine got me into the clutches of the school principal. He was a man who smiled a lot, and whom I admired, and I was awed to be in his impressive presence. But I had dared to bring what he considered to be literary garbage into his institution of learning. His extraordinary smile was replaced by an expression of spine-chilling menace. I was strongly warned to never, never, never again transgress in this unspeakable manner ... or else...

I lived quite a distance from school, ran most of the way to it daily, often arriving tardily. I was frequently sent to the Principal's office, as a result. Often, as I would near the school, I would hear the tardy bell ringing, and knew that my goose was cooked. I knew that once more I was The Eight-Ball Kid.

I worked part-time, after school, as a delivery boy for a printing shop. What I enjoyed most was seeing paper and smelling the printing ink. Nowadays it could be referred to as LSD of the spirit. Outside of that, the job stank.

I lived in Cleveland, Ohio ... what I most remember about Cleveland is that during many winters my frozen toes felt like they were about to fall off. Each week, at that time, copies of the Sunday Buffalo Times newspaper went on sale in Cleveland. I noticed with great interest that the Buffalo Times had a section

for youngsters which invited children to send in letters and stories for publication. Heart in mouth, I sent in some handwritten stories and letters. To my incredulous joy, some of them were published. I wasn't being paid for it, but I was actually getting something I wrote into print.

I remember writing a long story called "Monsters of the Moon". I sent it in to the Buffalo Times. Silence. No response. Then one day, many weeks later, I was surprised to receive a fan letter from someone who had read my story in the paper. He said it had been printed in serial form, and he enjoyed it very much. I excitedly sent for back issues of both the Sunday and daily Buffalo Times, anxious to see a printed copy of my story. I never located a printed copy of "Monsters of the Moon". Where was it actually published? On the Moon???

I produced more science fiction stories, writing in longhand because I could not type.

Someone I knew let me use a toy typewriter for a few minutes. Clumsily, I turned the wheel upon which the type-letters were attached, and on a sheet of white paper I laboriously fashioned:

THE COLOSAL PLANET

By Jerome Siegel

My spelling wasn't for real, but looking at that typed title with my name typed beneath it, I felt very thrilled.

When I wanted to use the toy typewriter again, I was turned down. Go get your own toy typewriter! But I didn't have the money for a toy typewriter.

I had a schoolfriend who could type. He taught me how to type on his typewriter, but he did most of the typing.

What emerged from this thrusting of fingers on typewriter keys was a typewritten magazine I entitled "COSMIC STORIES". I gave the firm the grandiose title of The Fantastic Fiction Publishing Company.

Using the pseudonym of "Charles McEvoy, President" ... oh, how I loved pseudonyms ... I announced world-shaking publishing plans.

I do not have copies of the typed magazine, which was sold through the mails, but all or most of it must have consisted of stories I wrote myself. The publication was issued from the address of my friend. (why not his own address) I haunted his house constantly to find out how orders and responses from readers were coming through. Finally, his family could no longer endure my continual presence, and so COSMIC STORIES went out of existence. Does even a single copy of it survive today? You're right. Only The Shadow knows!

When writing my stories, I was very much influenced by the unique fiction writing skill of Edgar Rice Burroughs. To me, he was absolutely ideal. Shakespeare, Dickens, O. Henry, Louisa May Alcott? Undoubtedly they had considerable merit, but how could ~~they~~ they, in my youthful opinion, compare with a literary brain like Burroughs, who in a jungle could pit Tarzan's magnificent physique against the fearsome might of an enraged or hungry lion ... Tarzan's mighty muscles would swell, almost alarmingly, and Tarzan would win the seemingly unequal struggle! Hooray for Tarzan! And on Mars, Burroughs' hero John Carter fought unbelievable menaces, hideous perils, and the warrior from Earth would WIN against ghastly creatures I fervently hoped to never meet in a dark alley.

I wanted to be another Burroughs, whose work I greatly admired. In the stories I wrote, my heroes, too, fought horrifying menaces and defeated them with great valor and strength. Somehow, the image in my mind of screen performer Douglas Fairbanks got into the act so that when one of my stalwart heroes clobbered the type of villain no mere human could possibly defeat, my hero would fight exultantly, enjoying unleashing his almost explosive prowess.

In Glenville High School, there was a box in a hallway into which contributions could be dropped. Heart pounding, I dropped some of my writings into the box. To my surprise, they were published in the school paper. I began frequently contributing feature stories.

In those days, I corresponded with other young would-be writers. One day, accompanying a handwritten letter to me from one of those fellows was a contract written in pencil. ~~He~~ He said he was becoming an agent. He was very

favorably impressed by my work, he wrote. So much so, that if I would sign that contract, he agreed to pay me ten cents each for all rights to every story I would ever write for the rest of my life.

Amused, I didn't sign, but showed the contract to my father, and smiled.

"See?" I said. "Somebody is actually willing to sign me up for life and pay me ten cents a story."

He shook his head, totally unimpressed.

I was unimpressed, too. Sign your life away, for a mere pittance! Ridiculous.

I remember that on the school's mimeograph machine, after school hours, I mimeographed a pamphlet, "Guests of the Earth". I wrote it under the pseudonum of Hugh Langley, because the name Jerome Siegel did not seem very literary to me.

I showed the pamphlet to my high school English teacher. She asked me to stay after class and spoke briefly to me. "Jerome, why do you write these kind of stories, when there are so many more worthwhile things you could write about?"

"Those are the kind of stories I enjoy writing," I replied.

She shrugged regretfully.

But I knew what I wanted to do. Fantastic themes enthralled me. That is what I would write. Let other people write what appealed to them!

Another teacher, a Science teacher, asked me why I wasn't a better student. Enthusiastically, I told him that though I was not a good science student, my mind teemed with science-fantasy tales, and I hoped to become a writer of science fiction.

He looked at me regretfully. "What a pity that you are wasting your time on such junk ... such foolishness..."

In the flesh, I was at the bottom of the Science class. But in my imagination, I told myself, I could create fantasies that would perhaps bewilder and awe even an Einstein.

Was I, an inexperienced kid, just wasting my time, as adults were warning

me. I refused to accept such discouragement. I vowed to keep trying and trying. Perhaps those scoffers might someday learn to their surprise that mere dreamers, a kid who is not a whining scholar, can make it, too.

For the school paper, I wrote a couple series of humorous vignettes about two characters; one character was "Stiletto" Vance, a boob detective; it was a satire on currently popular detective fiction, and on Philo Vance in particular. The other character was "Goober The Mighty" who was a wacky take-off on Tarzan. Goober had colossal strength and a mother who worried about her mighty muscled offspring.

I remember telling stories, which I would spontaneously make up as I went along, to neighborhood children and to my nieces. I told them I wanted to become a writer. They seemed to enjoy my made-up-on-the-spot stories, and they encouraged me.

My mother knew I hoped to become a writer. She thought it was just a wild, erratic notion and that nothing would really come of it. She told me that of all her children, she worried the most about me. She felt I was impractical and feared for my future. She knew I was not a good student. She knew that the likelihood of my ambitions succeeding were apparently very slim. Unlike me, most people were practical. Why couldn't I be practical, too?

Some people laughed scoffingly at the mere idea of me wanting to become a writer. I was jeered at. Nobody threw old shoes or rotten tomatoes at me, probably because they felt it wasn't worth the bother. I resolved to do the best I could to succeed at what I wanted to do, and to work hard at it.

In June of 1932, my father Michael had a heart attack after a robbery of his store and he died. This was during the worst of the Depression. My brother Harry had a civil service job as a mailman. After my father's death, Harry supported the family.

In high school, I encountered other teen-agers who also had literary aspirations. I was something of a loner, not too close to them, but there was a feeling of

excitement, a kind of intuitive hunch and almost a prescience that some of us would "make" it. But which ones? Would I make it, I wondered. I, who out of all my classes enjoyed only the English class?

Some of those other students did make it very big, years later. Jerome Lawrence, who collaborated on the Broadway productions "Inherit the Wind" and "Auntie Mame"; Seymour Heller went on to manage the career of Liberace; Willie Gilbert collaborated on the hit musical, "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying". Wilson Hirschfeld became managing editor of the Cleveland newspaper The Plain Dealer.

I remember a brief, downbeat discussion with a fellow student who also had literary aspirations. He asked, "Why don't you do better in school?" I told him that writing intensely interested me, but school did not. "Well," he commented, "we can't all be smart, I guess."

I had read somewhere that various others had made it as writers who had not been particularly interested in school. Maybe that's the kind of guy I was, I thought hopefully...

The high school I attended was only one block away from the house I lived in. No longer did I have to run a long distance to school, such as when I was attending junior high school. Nevertheless, I very often ran all the way, and barely got to school on time. On a few occasions, I did it so hastily I didn't bother to remove my pajamas, but ran to school wearing the pajamas under my outer garments.

Later, Superman wore his costume beneath his outer garments. Unlike me, he did not have pajama leg bottoms sticking partially out into view beneath his trouser legs.

As a schoolboy, I had unsatisfactory one-sided crushes. Oh, how I silently worshipped feminine beauty and all that went with it. My favorite song was "My Silent Love" and it would haunt my brain, even momentarily diverting me from my first love, science fiction. But I bore a frustrating burden. Not only did pretty girls not throw themselves at me, ugly ones didn't, either. Why? I hadn't asked

for the face or physique I was born with. I had not sculpted my nose, or fashioned my chin, or decided how broad my shoulders would be, or how tall I would become. I looked searchingly into the mirror for a clue. The mirror refused to commit itself.

Frustration ... inner torment ... feelings of inadequacy and bafflement and longing...

I escaped, even deeper, into daydreaming ... thinking how different things would be... IF ...

If I was handsome ... if I was powerful ... if I amazed the world ... if I was different from the way I was...

If my social life lurched lethargically, burped, and was spectacularly uninteresting, my mental life wasn't. I began to write an autobiographical novel about my teen-aged existence, about my longings and yearnings and incredibly dull dates. I showed the incomplete manuscript to someone and asked what she thought of it.

"You use the word 'ecstacy' too much," she said critically.

I decided the world would be vastly uninterested in my teen-aged yearnings and ripped up the manuscript and flushed it down the toilet. Blub... blub... gurgle... glunk...

I decided to try publishing a magazine again, since the stories I wrote were being rejected. If nobody cared to publish my stories, I would publish them myself. That way, someone would get to read them. And perhaps my amateur publication would grow and become a professional magazine sold on newsstands.

I named the magazine: SCIENCE FICTION. I mimeographed it on the Glenville High School mimeograph machine, after regular school hours.

In its third issue dated January, 1933, I printed a story of mine entitled "The Reign of the Superman", under my pseudonym of "Herbert S. Fine". In the pseudonym I combined the names of a cousin Herbert Schwartz and my mother's maiden name Sarah Fine.

It was the first story I ever wrote about a Superman. I wrote it in 1932, when I was very young and when the country suffered from the terrible Great Depression.

It was a giant step forward on: The Road to Superman.

****

Chapter Two

THE FIRST SUPERMAN STORY I EVER WROTE

The mimeographed magazine SCIENCE FICTION, which I published and edited, was sold only through the mails, as a mail-order publication. It was 15 cents a copy, $1.50 a year.

"The Reign of the Superman" story was written by me during the agony of the 1930s depression, when I was a teen-ager. I was unemployed, living in an era choked by great economic difficulties. Millions of people suffered ... there was trouble and worry and want everywhere; it almost vibrated in the air you breathed. It was almost impossible for young people like myself to become employed.

Since I couldn't get work when I wrote "The Reign of the Superman", it was appropriate that the opening setting of the story is the dreary breadline, where "downcast, disillusioned, unlucky men who find that life holds nothing but bitterness for them" are congregated.

Like so many other people living in those discouraging times, the thought of breadlines and possibly ending up in them haunted me. Living during such a painful time, worried about money and survival, it is understandable that as wish-fulfillment I created a being who in his abruptly miraculous transformation into a Superman, had no difficulty at all getting-rich-quick through use of his amazing super-powers.

The villain of the story, Professor Smalley, is described as follows: "To him, who had come of rich parents and had never been forced to face the rigors of life, the miserableness of these men seemed deserved."

Since I did not come from rich parents, it is rather understandable that as a Depression-era teen-ager I made the villain of this wonder tale someone whose parents had been wealthy.

The super-powers of this story's Superman came from a fragment of a meteor. An interesting parallel is that in later years, in the Superman comic book stories, a key element of the stories revolved about deadly Kryptonite meteors which endangered the existence of SUPERMAN.

The Superman in the "Reign" story is opposed by a maniacal scientist, Professor Smalley. Years later, in the SUPERMAN comic strip, Superman's main antagonist is the equally maniacal scientist Luthor. And so it is apparent that the seeds of the later comic strip SUPERMAN existed to some degree in the "Reign" Superman fiction story which I wrote back in 1932.

Early in the "Reign" story, the character who becomes a Superman after having a mysterious element injected into him, hears dialogue spoken from many far-away people who are not in view. This is similar to the super-hearing of the later comic strip SUPERMAN. This is another example that in the first superman fiction story of mine there were elements I further developed later in the SUPERMAN comic strip.

Upon discovering that he has more-than-normal powers, the "Reign" Superman tests his five senses, because he has discovered he has super-hearing. His investigation reveals that his scenting ability is only normal; later, in the SUPERMAN comic strip, I gave SUPERMAN super-smell ability.

Of special interest in the "Reign of the Superman" story is that the lead character discovers he has telescopic vision. He sees an event occuring on the distant planet Mars. This is a super-power which I later gave to the comic strip SUPERMAN ... super-vision.

The Superman of the "Reign" story has a sense of humor. This is another element that I later incorporated into the comic strip SUPERMAN character, who was often quite amused while performing super-deeds; being infinitely superior to ordinary earthlings tickled his funnybone.

In the "Reign" story, the Superman is a villain and he uses his super-abilities for selfish, evil purposes. His sardonic amusement at the befuddlement of lesser beings around him is hardly benevolent. Later, when I created the hero of the SUPERMAN comic strip, I turned this all around. The SUPERMAN comics character may have gotten some amusement out of being so superior to everyone else, but he had compassion for people who were less gifted than he. SUPERMAN of the comics uses his

super-powers in a sympathetic way, aiding those in need of his assistance.

The "Reign" Superman has the ability to read minds. He also has the ability to force other people to do whatever he concentrates upon for them to do.

The later comic strip SUPERMAN was a mastermind, somewhat like this earlier Superman of the "Reign" story. The "Reign" Superman had a sponge-like super-mind which enabled him to absorb information that existed ... everywhere.

The Superman of the "Reign" story describes himself as follows: "I am a veritable God!" The comic strip SUPERMAN is much more modest. The SUPERMAN of the comics know he has lots of super-stuff going for him, but he does not consider himself to be god-like. He is simply a human with powers ordinary humans do not possess. Both Supermen were well aware that in certain ways they loomed mightier than other mortals of Earth.

Early in the "Reign" story, there is a scene in which the Superman is misbehaving himself in the library. I must admit that I knew what I was writing about. I was a teenager, and often when I was in the library I would clown around, and get reprimanded by the library personnel. So there may be a little touch of autobiography here, faint though it is.

In the story, an elderly man in the library is reading an issue of the magazine entitled SCIENCE FICTION. I wasn't above giving my own magazine a plug in the story I wrote.

Next in the "Reign" story, the Superman who is impecunious goes about raising money, and he does it with ease. Since I was a teenager who was without funds in the midst of the Depression, to me this was vastly appealing wish-fulfillment.

Some of the early scenes in the "Reign" story are farcical, which demonstrates that I enjoyed having comic strip type story elements in stories I wrote.

The "Reign" Superman could visualize scenes occuring in the future. In the later SUPERMAN comic strip, the comics SUPERMAN went one better, and could actually travel into the future.

Near the conclusion of the story, a reporter becomes a character in the tale. Interesting, when you consider that in the later comic strip, SUPERMAN himself became a reporter in his alter-ego.

Consistently throughout the "Reign" story, I capitalized the first letter in the name "Superman". In the later SUPERMAN comic strip, I expanded the capitalization, capitalizing the entire name: SUPERMAN.

Yes, "The Reign of the Superman" was the first Superman story I ever wrote. But it was only the first step on: The Road to Superman.

Chapter Three

THE LOST SUPERMEN

Prior to writing "The Reign of the Superman" fiction story, I read an article in the Reader's Digest which greatly influenced my life and career.

The article, condensed from Fortune Magazine, revealed that there was big money in comic strips.

Startled by this revelation, I read about what seemed to me to be the absolutely fantastically huge earnings of the creators of newspaper comic strips. I believe the article mentioned, among others, the "Buck Rogers" strip which was a collaboration between writer Philip Nowlan and artist Dick Calkins.

The article spurred me to attempt to do likewise.

Writing short stories (and possibly novels, too) could be a fascinating career. But I decided that I might enjoy an even more profitable career if, like the funnies creators mentioned in that article, I could originate a successful comic strip.

What I knew about the technique and script format of writing comic strips was absolutely nil. But I had always loved comic strips, though I had not previously realized that the production and vending of them was a profitable industry.

I figured that writing for comics must be something like writing for the stage or movies. Only, instead of writing dialogue, and stage directions, for actors, you wrote dialogue and directions for an artist ... visualizing "camera" angles ... so as to guide the artist in producing the drawings for the comic strip. I knew you had to think primarily in terms of dramatic and/or humorous pictures... use lively dialogue and try to achieve memorable characterizations.

Through the mails, I contacted Clay Ferguson, Jr., an artist who was a science fiction fan like myself (I may have responded to a letter of his, perhaps, which appeared in the letters column of Amazing Stories magazine. I had contributed letters to that column.)

I originated the idea for a proposed newspaper comic strip about time-travelling adventurers to be called "The Time Crusaders". I wrote the script for it, sending it off to Clay. He drew it and mailed the artwork to me.

Terrified at venturing out of the protective covering of my creative cocoon and approaching the adult business world, I played hookey from high school and in person, very meekly and mildly, offered the comic strip for consideration to the Cleveland newspaper syndicates NEA [redacted] Service, Inc., and the Central Press Association -- the latter was a subsidiary of King Features Syndicate. I trembled inwardly, and probably outwardly, too, as I showed the daily strip art to the comics editors. It was rejected. But I remember how thrilled I was to see, on the street, as I looked through a glass window of NEA Service, Inc., original drawings of the Sunday "Captain Easy" comic strip and color-overlays being prepared by colorists for those pages. I was a great admirer of the work of Roy Crane, its artist-writer! Wow! Skipping school was risky, and would perhaps land me in trouble. But seeing original Roy Crane artwork was an exciting experience for me. It was a once-in-a-lifetime thrill.

I had a cousin who attended a different high school than I did, and at that school he collaborated with artist Joe Shuster on a comic strip which was published in the school newspaper. I mentioned to my cousin that I was interested in creating comic strips. He suggested that Joe and I get together.

Joe moved into my neighborhood. (A lucky move for both of us.) He introduced himself to me, at a public library. Immediately, Joe and I rushed to his apartment and instantaneously got to work originating proposed comic strips. I would originate the strip ideas, the characters and the script, and Joe would draw the artwork. The script contained captions, dialogue, and a description of what was to be drawn in each panel. I was delighted to see that Joe's art was exceptionally good, and that, like myself, he was a science fiction fan. Both of us were enthralled by the highly imaginative work of Amazing Stories magazine illustrator, Frank R. Paul. Joe and made the pleasurable discovery that if there was one trait which Joe and I mutually shared, it was ENTHUSIASM. We thoroughly enjoyed our collaborations.

Joe was the art editor of the "Science Fiction" fanzine, and he did the illustrations for my "Reign of the Superman" story.

We created proposed newspaper syndication space strips, cavemen strips, funny strips, etc. Despite our high hopes, they did not sell.

One day, after I submitted a strip to a major syndicate, I eagerly opened the letter and my heart beat excitedly as I read:

"Congratulations! The strip you have submitted is very well done."

But my hopes plopped as I read the brief letter's last sentence.

"However, we are not buying it."

One day, in high school, I brought in a daily comic strip Joe and I had created. I lovingly looked at the original artwork as I was seated in the "study hall" auditorium, hoping to lure inspiration and get more ideas. The teacher on guard in the study hall, became enraged at me. He grabbed away the drawings. When I asked him to return them to me, he whapped me over the head with them, and refused. Later, he tore up the drawings and threw them away, enraged at the teenager who dared to bring such junk into his citadel of scholarliness. Still later, he told me that he had not realized that those were original drawings, and he apologized. But he still glared at me. Not only had I brought junk into the school. I had compounded that hideous crime by creating that junk!

Undeterred by this physical attack on my person and creativity, I continued trying to create a successful comic strip. A beginner had to put up with the blows of Fate.

I interested Amazing Stories in having Joe and I prepare science fiction comics for publication in their magazine. How promising it seemed. But their interest dwindled, and they dropped the project.

One day, I saw on a newsstand a tabloid-sized black-and-white comic book entitled DETECTIVE DAN. It must have been one of the very first comic books published in America. Its sleuth hero was rather similar to Dick Tracy. It was drawn by Norman Marsh. (In later years, a newspaper strip version of this comic strip,

entitled Dan Dunn, was syndicated by Publishers Syndicate of Chicago.)

It now occurred to me, in early 1933, that a comic book with a Superman hero would have excellent possibilities for success. I wrote a comic book Superman script, and Joe illustrated my script by drawing the pages for the proposed "THE SUPERMAN" comic book. We could barely afford drawing paper, ink and postage.

The concept went a step beyond my fiction story, "The Reign of the Superman".

The fictional "Reign" Superman had been created, through trickery, by an evil scientist.

The hero of "THE SUPERMAN" comic book strip was also given super-powers against his will by a scientist. He gained fantastic strength, bullets bounced off him, etc. He fought crime with the fury of an outraged avenger.

I wrote to the publisher of the newsstand DETECTIVE DAN comic book, offering "THE SUPERMAN" for publication.

Shortly, I received a response which offered some hope. Stanley H. Livingston, President of Consolidated Book Publishers, Incorporated of Chicago wrote to me in his letter dated June 8, 1933:

> "Your letter of June 1 was referred to the writer while he was indisposed; hence the delay in replying.
>
> "We shall give careful consideration to your suggestion of bringing out a book something along the lines of 'DETECTIVE DAN', entitled 'THE SUPERMAN'.
>
> "I might say that the sales to date on 'DETECTIVE DAN' are somewhat discouraging, but this may be due to the warm weather.
>
> "However, will hold your letter on file and will advise you at a later date."

In an anxiety of suspense, I contacted Consolidated again, and received in reply a letter dated August 22, 1933:

> "We have delayed replying to your postal card of August 8 until we

could give the matter of 'The Superman' deliberate consideration.

"As near as we can estimate, we have sold approximately 40,000 out of 100,000 copies we published of DETECTIVE DAN, which, of course, on that basis, made it an unprofitable venture.

"This may be due to the fact that it was put out in the warm weather.

"We shall certainly keep your name on file, and should we desire to put out another edition of DETECTIVE DAN, if the author and artist is not agreeable, we then will be glad to take the matter up with you with a view of publishing 'The Superman' instead of DETECTIVE DAN.

"At the present time, however, we cannot give you any encouragement in this respect."

The prospects for publication of "The Superman" did not look very promising. I do recall, though, that when Mr. Livingston visited Cleveland, Joe and I showed "THE SUPERMAN" comic book pages to Mr. Livingston in his hotel room, and he was favorably impressed.

But Consolidated did not give Joe and me a firm publishing offer, and so Consolidated, in 1933, missed the golden opportunity to publish "THE SUPERMAN" comic book and perhaps launch a sensational multi-million dollar success. If they had done so, the comic book industry might have been successfully launched in America, years earlier. It was publication of "SUPERMAN", in 1938, by Detective Comics, Inc., which caused the comic book industry to become big-time and swiftly expand.

I had observed that on the cover of "DETECTIVE DAN", Norman Marsh listed the copyright in his name. And so I instructed Joe to letter in on the covers of "THE SUPERMAN" ... "© 1933 - Joe Shuster & Jerome Siegel". When our efforts to get "THE SUPERMAN" published did not succeed, we thought that one reason might be our inexperience in the field we wanted to break into. And so, thinking that it

would give the impression that Joe and I were not mere teenagers, I asked Joe to reletter and change "1933" to "1928". He did so.

Apparently this ploy of changing the date was not helpful. There was a depression on, and we two teenagers were not getting anyplace with our ambitions.

It occurred to me, after much discouragement, that if I collaborated with some newspaper syndicate cartoonists who were already active in the field, that perhaps I could break this deadlock and get my career moving.

Joe and I just didn't seem to be making any progress. None of our team-efforts had sold. [redacted] Since I was pretty prolific, I had been contacting some talented, already published cartoonists, asking them if they would be interested in collaborating with me on new comic strips. I asked that if they could not team-up with me themselves, that I would appreciate it if they would recommend some talented artists to me. Hal Foster, who drew such terrific artwork on the Sunday Tarzan comic strip, replied that he was not available, but he did recommend [redacted] a cartoonist to me. The work of the recommended cartoonist was of a humorous, not an illustrative nature, and so I didn't follow through.

I also contacted J. Allen St. John, who had illustrated covers and interiors of some Tarzan books. St. John expressed interest. I sent him continuity, and he drew up and sent a one week's supply of the daily comic strip artwork for my comic strip creation, "Rex Carson of the Ether Patrol". (In [redacted] those days, the void between planets was described as: ether.) "Rex Carson" never sold. Through the passage of years, I lost the original drawings.

In one of the issues of my mimeographed "SCIENCE FICTION" fanzine, I briefly mentioned I was collaborating with a famous illustrator. I did not name him, but the artist was J. Allen St. John and the strip was "Rex Carson".

Another artist whose work I admired was Leo E. O'Mealia who drew the Fu Manchu comic strip, based on the famous character created by Sax Rohmer. I thought the

weirdly atmospheric scenes, and the action sequences in the art were superbly done.

Because Joe and I seemed stymied, I contacted Leo E. O'Mealia, and interested him in collaborating with me on a "Superman" comic strip intended for newspaper syndication.

When I told Joe of this, he unhappily destroyed the drawn-up pages of "THE SUPERMAN", burning them in the furnace of his apartment building. At my request, he gave me as a gift the torn cover artwork. We continued collaborating on other projects.

About "THE SUPERMAN" comic book pages which were submitted to Consolidated Book Publishers in 1933, and then destroyed...

The hero of "THE SUPERMAN" was not from another planet. He did not have a dual-personality as a reporter. *

Prior to "THE SUPERMAN", "The Reign of the Superman" story was written by me in 1932, and was published in the January, 1933 issue of "Science Fiction".

I originated "THE SUPERMAN" comic book character, story and project, early in 1933.

"THE SUPERMAN" was influenced by my earlier "The Reign of the Superman" story.

BOTH Superman heroes had their super-powers FORCED upon them by a wonder-working scientist.

The Superman of "The Reign of the Superman" was a villain. The Superman of "THE SUPERMAN" proposed comic book was super-heroic and had greater super-powers than the "Reign" Superman.

Leo O'Mealia's first letter to me was dated July 17, 1933 and he stated that if a syndicate was interested in my comic strip idea, he would be pleased to do the artwork on the proposed feature. He had drawn the "Fu Manchu" comic strip for The Bell Syndicate.

Many, many years have gone by since the early 1930s when I was a teen-ager. I am now in my mid-sixties, but I remember that in 1933 I wrote the continuity for a proposed newspaper syndication comic strip which I created and entitled "Superman". I scripted it in "Sunday" strip format, approximately 12 panels to the page. I submitted the script directly to The Bell Syndicate.

Henry M. Snevily, the manager of the syndicate, wrote a letter in response in which he expressed interest in the "Superman" comic strip, which I had suggested be syndicated to newspapers by Bell. I no longer have that particular letter.

I sent O'Mealia a copy of the "Superman" script I had mailed to Snevily.

Around September 11, 1933, O'Mealia wrote to me that he had spoken to Snevily about my script. O'Mealia said he had begun work on the comic strip art, but was condensing my script so that there would be sufficient room for the artwork.

Since I was a tyro, an absolute novice in the mysterious (to me) technique of creating and scripting comic strips, I did not at this point fully realize the absolute necessity of keeping dialogue and captions sufficiently brief so that it would not crowd the artwork. A proficient comics writer walks a tightrope... he should not write too many words, but the words which are lettered on the drawings must be exactly the right words to dramatically supplement the artwork ... the artwork should dominate, because comics are a visual form of entertainment. O'Mealia helped me realize that this is an absolute "must". In a way, this is similar to today's screenplay writing technique -- the best screenplay authors write with the camera and actors' performances foremost in mind ... dialogue is to be used effectively, but sparingly, and should not smother the visual impact of the film.

O'Mealia advised that I work a girl, the romance element, into the feature.

Did I revise and include a girl in the "Superman" newspaper comic strip script I was writing at that time? I believe so, but I no longer have a copy of the script of that particular version of "Superman".

O'Mealia said he was very busy and would not be able to "do much on your stuff for another week". He also suggested that I stick to my original script and story and not give in to pressure by whatever organization took on the comic strip, to make changes.

It was good advice. In later years, I found that most editorial and business people I dealt with all wanted to impose their opinions and suggestions on how the "Superman" feature should be deliniated or altered. One such person suggested that I have Superman appear in the comic strip infrequently ... and emphasize the Man of Steel's dual-identity Clark Kent, so that Superman's rare appearances in the feature would be eagerly looked forward to with great anticipation by the reader. I disagreed, feeling that such a policy would severely dilute the sensational impact of, and perhaps destroy, the "Superman" comic strip.

It is said that novelists have more control over what they write, than originators of other types of literary material. Some novelists, it has been said, want nothing at all to do with the adaptation of their novel into a movie, because they are not at all happy about alterations imposed on their brainchild.

In the very earliest years, when Joe and I produced comics for comic books, I wrote what I felt like writing, Joe would illustrate it, we would send it in to the publishing company and it would be printed unaltered. Not until Superman was running a while, and became a hit, did editors start to tell me what they wanted done with the Superman character I had created.

Concerning O'Mealia and the drawings he made for my "Superman" comics creation, I was anxious to see the "Superman" artwork he was producing. However, I never saw his Superman drawings. He did not send me a copy of it.

I do, however, recall this about that particular "Superman" script in which The Bell Syndicate had indicated some interest. The story began many years in the

far distant future of our world. A tremendous upheaval was about to cause the planet Earth to blow up. Moments before the explosion, the scientist-adventurer "Superman" hero of the story, seeking to survive, sent himself back through time, in a time-machine, into our modern era where he immediately began battling crime with his super powers; all Earth people of the extremely distant future he came from had gained fantastic super powers due to evolution. When the superman-hero reached our era, he at once became involved in astounding adventures. I believe I did inject a girl into the story so there would be a romance angle.

I was extremely eager for the "Superman" newspaper project to get moving, but nothing happened. My letters of inquiry to O'Mealia went unanswered for a while. Here I was, an ambitious teenager anxious to set the world on fire with the comic strip adventures of what I felt was the most exciting action-hero character of all time. But an uncooperative fate made me, despite my youthful impatience, wait and wait and wait and wait.

Leo O'Mealia wrote to me on November 2, 1933, that though Mr. Snevily had decided not to put the strip out right away, Snevily <u>was</u> interested, and there was the possibility that The Bell Syndicate might know in a month or so if they wanted to syndicate "Superman".

While I had hoped for immediate acceptance of "Superman" for newspaper syndication, the prospect of a possible sale in the near future was encouraging for me, an inexperienced kid with nothing but a proposed "Superman" comic strip and soaring ambition to back me up. An expert professional artist liked my "Superman" comic strip script. The manager of a major newspaper syndicate was interested. Maybe ... maybe in just a month or so ... perhaps even before the end of 1933, fame and fortune would hurtle in, snatch impatiently waiting me up to the heights of comics creation success, and whisk me happily along so that I, Jerome Siegel, Cleveland teenager and non-scholar, could become another <u>Edgar Rice Burroughs!</u> Wow! Great! Terrific! But when would this happen...when, was the question. <u>When???</u>

"I'm ready, Fate," I thought. "Stop dragging your feet! Let's move!"

But as in the case of "THE SUPERMAN", where the comic book publisher Consolidated, of Chicago, had indicated interest earlier that year ... in this latest instance in regard to "Superman" possibly being drawn by O'Mealia and syndicated to newspapers by The Bell Syndicate ... time dragged by... maddeningly, infernally slowly by ... there was no action, no progress, just ... inertia ... delay ... sagging, dampening hopes ... an empty yearning...

Suffer, teenager, suffer! Live in a vacuum ... observe each day drag by without the results you yearn for, materializing. The interest of Consolidated faded away, remember? Like a fly stuck in molasses, you are getting strictly nowheres with The Bell Syndicate and O'Mealia. Why don't you give up this silly, impractical aspiration of yours? What have you accomplished, ever? Why don't you stop this nonsense and admit you've only been chasing rainbows, dreaming impossible dreams, pursuing the unobtainable?

NO!

I wrote again and again to O'Mealia. Superman. What about Superman? How is the Superman artwork coming along? How are things at The Bell Syndicate? O'Mealia did not respond to my persistent requests for information about if there had been any progress at all for Superman ... Superman ... Superman...

Almost a year later, O'Mealia wrote to me in a letter dated August 31, 1934 that artist Russell Keaton was very good and that O'Mealia was pleased to learn that Keaton was working with me on Superman.

What had happened?

Well, I had given up on expecting any activity regarding "Superman" from either O'Mealia or The Bell Syndicate. They just did not seem to be interested anymore in my super brainchild. But I had not lost my faith that I had a sensational comic strip creation in "Superman".

Superman. Superman. Superman. Some people dream about finding sunken Atlantis, some people dream about starring on Broadway, some people think about transmuting lead into gold, or discovering the meaning of Life, or finding a quarter in Central Park, but me, I dreamt and thought endlessly about making a colossal success out of my comic strip inspiration: "Superman".

In mid-1934, I had seen the art work of cartoonist Russell Keaton on the syndicated "Skyroads" aviation newspaper comic strip, which was written by Dick Calkins, the artist of "Buck Rogers".

I liked the work of Keaton very much. I thought that Keaton could probably draw "Superman" superbly. And so I wrote to him, care of the newspaper syndicate for which he worked, asking if he would be interested in collaborating with me on new newspaper syndication comic strips.

In a letter dated June 9, 1934, he wrote back expressing interest in the possibility of our teaming-up together on a newspaper syndication comic strip.

Ironically, in his letter, Keaton stated he cared for "more of an idea that isn't too wild and adventurous". Actually, let's face it, it is rather difficult to think of anything more wild and adventurous than super-powered Superman. Superman who can pulverize meteors into fragments with his little finger, race around the entire circumference of the world in the twinkling of an eye, and single-handedly end wars during a coffee break.

However, blithely ignoring Keaton's comment, I submitted for his consideration the script for wild, adventurous mighty "Superman".

Russell Keaton's letter to me of June 14, 1934 was very enthusiastic. He stated that in his opinion "Superman" was already a tremendous hit, and that he would be glad to collaborate with me on "Superman". [redacted] He was very busy drawing "Skyroads" several nights a week in addition to ghosting "Buck Rogers" Sunday pages. However, he was willing to get busy on "Superman" in his extra time.

Upon receiving this enthusiastic letter from Russell, my optimism soared again.

Professional artist Leo E. O'Mealia had liked my "Superman" newspaper comic strip idea, but his interest in the project had apparently dwindled away. Now another very excellent newspaper syndication cartoonist, too, liked my idea, thought it had hit possibilities, and was willing to collaborate with me on it.

1933 has been very frustrating for me. Success with my proposed "Superman" newspaper syndication comic strip had eluded me.

Maybe 1934, with Russell Keaton doing the artwork on my favorite project, would be the turning point for me and Superman! I was ready and very willing.

On June 22, 1934, Russell Keaton wrote that he had begun work on "Superman". He stated his friend Norman Marsh, who was drawing "Dan Dunn" for Publishers Syndicate in Chicago, might possibly help sell "Superman" to Publishers Syndicate.

The mention of Norman Marsh and "Dan Dunn" in Russell Keaton's letter is quite ironic. The existence of "DETECTIVE DAN", starring Dan Dunn, and drawn by Norman Marsh, was the catalyst which spurred me into creating "THE SUPERMAN" comic book and submitting it to Consolidated Book Publishers, Inc. of Chicago, the publisher of "DETECTIVE DAN". After the prospective publication of "THE SUPERMAN" pooped out, I created another comic strip, this one entitled "Superman", in which I had interested both O'Mealia and The Bell Syndicate... and now I had originated still another version of "Superman" to be drawn by Keaton ... and now Keaton was suggesting that Norman Marsh could help Keaton and me sell the "Superman" newspaper strip to a newspaper syndicate.

On June 22, 1934, Keaton wrote to me that I could expect to receive the "Superman" drawings from him soon.

It all looked very, very promising to me. Finally, it seemed, "Superman" was going to stop fitfully dragging along, and suddenly burst into fame, prosperity and success, taking me, his creator, along for the super joy ride. And the strip's art would be drawn by a superbly gifted cartoonist, Russell Keaton. Yes, things looked very promising, indeed.

On July 6, 1934, Keaton wrote to me that he would mail to me the week of daily strips he was working on, as soon as he completed it, so I could look at it and comment on the artwork. He mentioned that if I came to Chicago for the Fair, we could meet and talk things over.

I wasn't too eager to travel to Chicago, and meet Keaton. First and foremost, I couldn't afford it. I was unemployed and without funds. I hardly had enough money to take a bus cross-town. Usually, I walked, instead of using buses or street-cars. In addition, I did not want Keaton to find out that I was just an inexperienced kid. Such a realization might damage what I hoped would grow into a mutually worthwhile and profitable relationship.

On July 11, 1934, Keaton wrote that I could expect the "Superman" drawings by the middle of the next week. He felt it was necessary to produce a second week, too, for presentation to the syndicates.

By now, I was convinced that Superman was finally going to materialize in drawn newspaper comic strip form and that a vigorous sales effort to the major newspaper syndicates would begin soon. Again, my hopes were very high. Success seemed just around the corner. I had suggested to Keaton that "Superman" could also be published as a comic book. He wrote back that he did not believe "Superman" would succeed on the newsstands as a comics magazine because nothing of that type had succeeded in that field, yet.

Keaton's comment that he did not think "Superman" would be successful as a newsstand comic book is exceedingly ironic, because years later it was on the newsstands that "Superman", in the version written by me and drawn by Joe Shuster, rapidly became outstandingly successful ... so much so that it inspired hordes of imitators into imitating the costume, super-strength, dual-identity, postures and feats of trail-blazing "Superman". But Keaton stated he did have faith that my brainchild "Superman" would be successful.

Russell mailed to me the first week of the "Superman" daily strips, and he asked me to rush them immediately back to him. Receiving the artwork, I thought he had done a terrific art job on the strips and wrote and told him so. I promptly returned the art work to him. I did not make photostats of the strips, and so I can only recall from memory that they were superbly done and I was extremely pleased with the excellent job he had done, illustrating my script.

I wrote my enthused reaction about his excellent [redacted] artwork to Keaton. He responded with thanks and he complimented me on the "Superman" scripts I had written.

By this time I had revealed my age to him, and he wrote back that he was pleased to learn our ages were almost the same. I had considered my youth to be a handicap, thinking that perhaps people in the adult world would not consider my ideas seriously if they knew how young I was.

Keaton's next letter to me, dated August 7, 1934, commented favorably on the additional "Superman" script I had sent to him.

Unfortunately in those days, and for many years after that, I did not keep carbon copies of letters I wrote... in those early years, I was not even aware that business people keep carbon copies of correspondence. The letters I wrote regarding "Superman", in the early thirties, would probably be of enlightening [redacted] now to people who are interested in such matters, since it would reveal a lot of details about the origination of "Superman", back in the days when "Superman" was first coming into existence.

I never did get to see any additional "Superman" art drawn by Russell Keaton, other than the first week of "Superman" daily strips he mailed to me, which I had returned to him immediately. I had, and still have, tremendous admiration for his wonderful skills as a comics artist.

Keaton's next letter to me was dated September 11, 1934 and he mentioned that he had pencilled in the second week of "Superman" daily strips. He felt that he could not set a definite date when that second week of daily strips would be completed. He expressed worry that the syndicate where he was currently employed might learn about his "secret" that he was preparing the "Superman" comic strips.

On October 17, 1934 he wrote to state that three strips of the second week were finished, and that the other three were still in rough pencil. He stated that the five dollars page rate of "Famous Funnies" was "ridiculously low".

I had relayed to Keaton a response I had received from "Famous Funnies", a new comics magazine at that time, after I wrote to them about possibly supplying original comics which they could publish along with their reprinted newspaper comics. The page rate they mentioned was extremely low, and they had said they would be interested in syndicating new features they published in "Famous Funnies".

Keaton's next letter to me, sent November 3, 1934, stated "Superman" was in a locker in a bus station, and that he was going to show the feature to Publishers Syndicate, after that weekend.

Russell Keaton had a meeting up at Publishers Syndicate. Though their enthusiasm was not overwhelming, they wanted to know some things about me, my background, my political affiliations, etc. Much of the strip material dealt with Superman as a child. When would Superman, as an adult, zoom into super-activity in the comic strip?

I responded with a letter. I fervently hoped my youth and real lack of comic strip producing experience would not be held against me. I mentioned storyline plans I had for future "Superman" episodes.

Then Fate, which during my struggles to get "Superman" before the public had not been particularly helpful and friendly, took careful aim and savagely kicked me in the teeth.

I got a brief note from Russell Keaton.

He wrote that he was completely withdrawing from any participation at all in the "Superman" comic strip and that as far as he was concerned: "the book is closed".

Unhappily, I destroyed the letter.

What a let-down, after all my high hopes!

I felt miserable, awful, depressed, broken-hearted.

I had had such high hopes that "Superman" was finally going to blast off out of total obscurity into meteoric success.

And now, this ...

summary of failure

First, I had collaborated with Joe Shuster on the proposed comic book "THE SUPERMAN". Consolidated Book Publishers had exhibited some luke-warm interest, then had withdrawn.

Next, I had interested The Bell Syndicate and artist Leo E. O'Mealia in doing Superman as a syndicated newspaper comic strip. But their interest had evaporated, too.

Then, I had interested artist Russell Keaton, a terrific artist, in teaming up with me on a Superman newspaper comic strip syndication project. But after his early enthusiasm he had decided to withdraw from the venture and had informed me "the book is closed."

Closed.

Was "Superman" doomed to die? Was this favorite project of mine just the wasted efforts of a teenaged kid with more ambition than common sense? Was my [redacted] goal of becoming a big-time comics creator just a crazed illusion of a hopeless day-dreamer?

Should I forget it, this apparently foolish obsession?

NO.

A stubborn streak in me refused to abandon the project.

I had hoped to crash the big-time by collaborating with major syndication cartoonists. But following that direction had led to a dead-end.

I decided to <u>try again</u>, begin all over by writing a new and even better version of "Superman". I still had a high opinion of Joe Shuster's art ability. Perhaps Joe, despite the failure of "THE SUPERMAN", would be interested in collaborating with me on a [redacted] new, even greater version of spectacular "Superman".

after a short lapse of time

That evening, I began to write the newest and best version of "Superman". Spurred by the impatience of Publishers Syndicate about why didn't the adult Superman appear more quickly on the scene, I decided to remedy this. I told the entire origin of Superman, from his departure as an infant on the planet Krupton to his growing up to become a super-powered crusader on Earth, in <u>one daily strip</u>. Then I immediately showed Superman in dramatic super-action

and depicted him as busily wrapping up an adventure he was already involved in. My aim was to, in one week's episode of six daily comic strips, powerfully present the uniqueness and super powers of my favorite comics concept: SUPERMAN.

Late that night I went to bed, with paper and pencil nearby. I thought more and more about the project, ideas coming to me while I was in a state of semi-slumber ... perhaps surging up not only from my subconscious, but from the universal subconscious, also.

I myself had ambitions about becoming a reporter. And so it occurred to me that it would be very interesting if Superman kept his super-identity a secret and pretended to be just an ordinary reporter. As a reporter, he would uncover crises and people needing the aid of a Superman. Then he could aid them after switching to the costumed incredible Superman.

Since Superman was all I would like to have been, though I was meek and mild ... I thought it would be amusing to have Superman, in his dual-identity of reporter Clark Kent, PRETEND to be meek-and-mild. What fun Superman would have inwardly in that disguise When people sneered at Clark -- when he knew that anytime he wished, he could astound one and all as the fantastic, greatly admired Superman!

Girls had not flipped over me -- and the attractive girls I admired not only seemed turned-off toward me, but almost hostile in their non-interest.

Wouldn't it be really something if a scornful girl I idolized was in love with me, and didn't even know it? Not with the obvious, uninteresting outer me ... who turned her off. But with the inner me, who at least in my imagination could accomplish all things.

And so, in an exercise of wish-fulfillment growing out of inner frustration, I created attractive girl reporter Lois Lane, who had an antipathy toward meek, mild Clark Kent... yet she was go-go over super-powered Superman. And Superman had his mind on great crusades rather than romance.

I kept dozing off, then awakening ... and as I awakened and got more inspirations I would go into the bathroom, turn on the light there, and jot down additional script in daily strip form. I couldn't turn on the light in the bedroom, because I shared the bed with my brother Leo and did not want to awaken him.

This went on until the wee hours of the morning.

At dawn, I enthusiastically raced about a dozen blocks to Joe's apartment. I showed Joe the script and asked him if he would be interested in collaborating with me on this newest version of my Superman syndicate comic strip project. He enthusiastically agreed, and got to work at once.

As Joe began making initial sketches about what this newest version of Superman should look like, I stood beside him, making suggestions. I had already originated the concept that in his identity of Superman, the lead character would be attired in a colorful, tight-fitting athletic costume. As Joe was doing this very first sketch of what Superman would look like, I told him that the letter "S", inside an emblem, should be on the chest of Superman's costume, to help make Superman distinctively recognizeable at a glance. I also suggested that Superman wear a cape, so that the cape would whip around when the character was in action, giving the impression of more speed; this would add more colorful hyper drama to the movements of Superman, especially when he was leaping or flying.

In addition, I said that Clark Kent should wear glasses. I wore glasses. In some pretty obvious parallels, Clark Kent wore glasses like me; he was meek and mild like me; he didn't dazzle luscious females, and neither did I.

But Superman ... ah, Superman had the mighty muscles I didn't have; he could amazingly deal out justice to bad guys and correct evil wrongs, which I couldn't do, though I felt indignant and sad about the social injustices afflicting our imperfect world. In my quiet, introverted way, I aspired to do great things. Superman didn't just want to do amazing deeds, he did them. He could leap over buildings in a single bound, and do many astounding deeds

ordinary humans can't do. But Superman of the comics, super powerful though he was, might never have come into being, if I had not led the life I led and dreamt about surmounting impossible odds.

And so "Superman" now had still another opportunity to become a smash hit overnight.

But it didn't happen overnight. There were more discouragements ahead, and it would take a number of years before "Superman" would finally meet the public.

This detailed account about the real creation of "Superman" has never been made public before. Many people think "Superman" just popped into my head one night, and that's all there was to it. — that's not true said

That just isn't so. But since publicity emphasis has always been on the "Superman" version which was first published in ACTION COMICS #1, June 1938 issue, this previously unrevealed story is now being disclosed for the first time.

Joe, who had attended an art school, wanted to further improve his art expertise. He hired a model to pose for his drawings of the Lois Lane character in the "Superman" comic strip. He wanted to make Lois as lovely and appealing as possible. He couldn't afford to pay much, and the payment to the model must have been minimal.

One day, at the apartment where he lived with his parents and brother and sister I met the pretty, young model who was posing for those Lois Lane sketches.

Her name was Joanne Carter, and she was strikingly attractive. I thought she was a perfect "Lois Lane" ... her hairstyle, her shapely figure, her very lovely face were exactly right for the girl reporter character I had visualized. She was very bright and she, too, had a lot of enthusiasm, like Joe and me.

I must admit that seeing "Lois Lane" in person made my head spin. "Wow," I thought. "She's terrific!" But I was too meek and mild to let Joanne know how great I thought she was. She was a very attractive girl, and I was just a teenaged kid, with a giant sized inferiority complex, who had nothing but grandiose plans that seemed very far from materializing into actuality. I recall, though, that she was very favorably impressed with the "Superman" comic strip, and she said she was confident it would be successful

Watching this original model for "Lois Lane" pose, I did not realize that she would be the first girl to portray Lois ... Lois my dream-girl, Lois the inaccessible, Lois the divine ... the lovely scoop-hunting gutsy newsgal who would later be impersonated in film serials, and on television, by Noel Neill and Phyllis Coates. And in the "Superman" movies by Margot Kidder.

There was a lot more I couldn't possibly have realized. I did not know that I would get married, and that after my first marriage ended in divorce, that I would marry Joanne, the lovely girl I had known during the very early days of the creation of "Superman". I did not realize that Joanne would play a very important role in helping me to survive when things got extremely bad for me and my career, [redacted] and that she would play a vital role in ... after many years of Joe and I being separated from "Superman", without which our lives had little meaning ... helping Joe and me become reunited with "Superman" again.

I did not realize that Joanne and I would someday have a lovely, talented daughter Laura Siegel -- a supergirl who would share some [redacted] agonizingly difficult times with us ... that Laura would someday be a girl radio newscaster and TV newswriter -- a 1970s "Lois Lane II" -- that Laura would perform as an actress on network television, and display more and more talents.

But in the mid 1930s I just admiringly watched Joanne model for "Lois Lane", not knowing how fatefully our lives would merge in later years.

In his August 31, 1934 letter to me, after I had informed Leo E. O'Mealia that I was collaborating with Russell Keaton on "Superman", O'Mealia wrote: "I haven't changed my mind about working with you on syndicate-strips. [redacted] I haven't changed my mind about your stuff, either. I still think you write a fast, gripping story."

But we never did get to work together, any further.

Years later, after "Superman" clicked big, I phoned O'Mealia one day when I was visiting New York. I asked if he would be interested in collaborating with me on comics or perhaps joining Joe's art staff. He was then drawing sports cartoons for the New York Daily News. He replied no, that he was practically retired, "I'll

leave that kind of thing to you younger fellows."

After "Superman"'s success had been written up in the Saturday Evening Post, I sent a friendly letter to Russell Keaton, who was drawing "Flyin' Jenny", a strip about a girl aviator for The Bell Syndicate. In his letter of October 27, 1941 he congratulated me on the success of "Superman". He said he had missed the boat with "Superman" because he had a good job at the time.

Russell Keaton died in 1945. I think he was one of the best comic strip adventure artists in the business.

"THE SUPERMAN" ... prepared by Joe and me. It died a fiery death.

"SUPERMAN" ...which I created and wrote, and for which Leo O'Mealia drew some art which I never saw, and in which The Bell Syndicate showed some interest. It wilted and died.

"SUPERMAN" ... another version which I created and wrote, and for which Russell Keaton drew two weeks of daily strips. Keaton "closed the book" and withdrew from the project.

I think of those version as ... The Lost Supermen.

I have a feeling of affection for those lost supermen of the comics into whom I tried to breathe life, but who never surfaced onto comics pages.

On paper, they were the mightiest men on Earth. But in real life they were very, very fragile.

****

Chapter Four

THE OVERNIGHT SUCCESS THAT TOOK YEARS TO HAPPEN

Joe and I enthusiastically prepared four weeks of "Superman" daily strips. One week was completely drawn and inked; the following three weeks were drawn in pencil. We had prepared this sufficient number of sample strips so as to fully delineate what the "Superman" comic strip was all about. Now all we had to do was show the "Superman" strip to newspaper syndicates, they would agree with us that we had a spectacular hit on our hands, and overnight we would become rich and famous! Right? Wrong!

To backtrack a little ... one of the things which spurred me into creating a "Superman" strip was something a syndicate editor said to me, after I had been submitting various proposed comic strips to him. "The trouble with your stuff is that it isn't spectacular enough," he said. "You've got to come up with something sensational! Something more terrific than the other adventure strips on the market!"

What, I thought, could be more sensational than a Superman who could fly through the air, who was impervious to flames, bullets, and a mob of enraged, amok adversaries?

So I was pretty confident this same editor wouldn't say, upon seeing "Superman", that it wasn't sensational.

Instead, he commented, "This is too sensational..."

I learned the hard way that it is easy for potentional purchasers to downgrade anything.

Shakespeare could've been told, "Too tragic."

Herman Melville could've been told, "Who in his right mind would be interested in a whale story!"

Behind Charles Dickens' back, some unimpressed editor might have muttered, "The dickens with Dickens!"

Having read writers trade magazines, I knew that if you copyright literary

material, you own it. I had not copyrighted my fanzine "SCIENCE FICTION". Joe and I, in 1933, had lettered on the cover drawing of "THE SUPERMAN" that the copyright was secured by Joe Shuster and Jerome Siegel.

Now that the "Superman" daily strip drawings were completed, I went to the Cleveland [redacted] public library's main branch to read up on the subject. What I read, gave me the impression that it was necessary for something to be in print before you could copyright it. And so I came to the incorrect conclusion that Joe and I could not copyright "Superman" until it was published.

copyright *

Actually, we could have produced a brief mimeographed version of "Superman" and copyrighted it. In addition, I could have written the script in radio script form and copyrighted it. Further, the strips could have been copyrighted under the classification of a work of art.

Under the mistaken belief that Joe and I could not copyright "Syperman" until it was published, I did not copyright "Superman" in our names.

That error has cost Joe and me many millions of dollars.

I was young, inexperienced, optomistic and felt that Joe and I would be treated fairly in the literary market place. It's a great big beautiful world we live in, isn't it? Most stories have happy endings, don't they? Life can be beautiful. People are nice. Civilization isn't a jungle. Human beings aren't predatory monsters, and besides, there is such a thing as The Golden Rule.

Also, our thoughts were mainly on writing and drawing.

I tried to get an agent to represent us. The agents I approached were not interested in handling somebody trying to sell a comic strip.

So I continued making sales efforts myself, unaware that even though you might create a smash hit, if you are not sufficiently protected and you part with your rights in your literary creation, you may not only create a smash hit, but you yourself may get smashed to a pulp, economically. And deprived of working on your creation and discarded and get nothing further from the smash hit.

Nervous, yet hopeful, I contacted the Cleveland newspaper syndicates. Central Press

Association's editor, without very much enthusiasm, sent the "Superman" strips on to the parent company, King Features Syndicate, but King returned the strips, equally unenthusiastic.

Discouraged, I wrote this editor a letter saying I was determined to get someplace in the syndication business; that I was so eager to get started that I would take any employment available at Central Press, even sweeping the floors. You name it. I'd do it.

My offer was not accepted.

I walked the Depression-drenched streets of Cleveland, Ohio -- very depressed. How, when, where, would I ever, ever get going?

NEA Service rejected "Superman", too.

Yet I felt very strongly that "Superman" was a super-strip, destined to become a colossal hit. Why didn't others realize, and acknowledge it? Was the world blind? Was I nuts?

In the years that followed, on a few occasions when I showed the "Superman" sample strips in person, I would detect what seemed like a predatory gleam in the eyes of the person I was showing the strips to ... a sharp, crafty gleam that worried me. Would the strip be rejected, and then its idea copied? But if I didn't show it, it would never get published.

Apparently, no one was interested enough to bother copying it. (Years later, after "Superman" clicked, and the sales of Action Comics, in which it appeared, soared, many, many copycat imitations and variations of the "Superman" comic strip flooded the newsstands. Even today, forty years later, many super-hero comics are being published which would never have appeared except for the great success of "Superman". Some of them fly, wear costumes and even have dual-identities.)

I submitted "Superman" to The Bell Syndicate, which years earlier had shown some interest in an earlier version of "Superman". They rejected it.

I submitted "Superman" to Publishers Syndicate of Chicago, which had shown a mild interest in the version of "Superman" written by me and drawn by Russell Keaton. They turned it down, too.

It didn't look very promising for "Superman". Potential markets didn't get excited about my super-brainchild the way I thought they would. I was baffled because I strongly felt that "Superman" was a "natural" for comics pages.

I submitted "Superman", together with other proposed comics to the "Famous Funnies" comic book, which had invited me to submit material for consideration at abysmally low rates. I carefully tied the package in a network of criss-crossing strings and knots, the better to protect its passage across the country to its destination. The package was returned to me by "Famous Funnies" unopened, still covered with my criss-crossing, knotted strings. And so "Famous Funnies", which had not bothered to open this package in their "junk mail", lost out on the opportunity to present "Superman" to comic book readers and earn many millions of dollars.

I contacted various newsstand publishers, trying to interest them in going into the comic book business.

On November 16, 1934, the editor of Super Magazines consided my samples and ideas for a comic book, but decided against the project. Back in June 26, 1934, he had expressed interest in Joe and me doing some comic strip adventure series for two of his pulp magazines, but had turned down the two strips we submitted for publication.

Three years later, on October 29, 1937 he wrote regretfully that had he used my suggestion for a comic strip magazine several years earlier it would have been the first on the market and "probably would have made a fortune for us all." And so, in 1937, he turned down my offer for him to publish "Superman" as a comic book because he felt the field was very crowded. He lost out on the opportunity to publish "Superman" as a comic book and make [redacted] "a fortune for us all".

When Dell Publishing Company published the "Popular Comics" comic book, I submitted "Superman" and other features to it. M. C. Gaines, who was connected with the magazine, returned the strips to me.

I contacted The Bell Syndicate to ask if they would reconsider "Superman". On February 21, 1935, Joseph B. Agnelli replied, "If you will send in samples of your SUPERMAN strip, we will be pleased to consider it again, although the market is still crowded with features. Mr. Snevily has been away for some time on a business trip, but we expect him back in the next couple of weeks."

On May 27, 1935, I received a letter from Horace Epes of The Bell Syndicate: "In the absence of Mr. Snevily, who is on a trip that will keep him away from the office until some time next month, I am replying to your letter of May 11 in regard to your SUPERMAN comic strip. The photostats which arrived under separate cover have been given careful consideration and discussed with my associates. The drawings are well done and the idea is rather interesting, but we would not care to undertake the syndication. As a matter of fact, we are in the market now only for strips likely to have the most extraordinary appeal to papers generally and, frankly, we do not feel that Superman gets into that category. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to consider your work."

The Bell Syndidate did not consider "Superman" to be a strip with "extraordinary appeal".

Was I kidding myself, thinking "Superman" was about as extraordinary as a comic strip hero could get?

I still felt that "Superman" was no ordinary namby-pamby creation. I was puzzled by the comment of Mr. Epes, but felt he was wrong about "Superman".

Early in 1935, I saw "New Fun", a comic book of original comics,on the newsstand

and submitted some comic strip material for consideration.

Most of the submitted strips were turned down, but among the material were the photostatic negatives of "Dr. Occult", a proposed newspaper syndication horror strip which I had prepared months earlier in collaboration with an artist other than Joe. Syndicates had not been interested in "Dr. Occult", and I was not satisfied with the work of the artist. However, I had submitted the strip idea to "New Fun". The editor asked to see "Dr. Occult" art in comic book page size. I had also submitted script for a proposed "Henri Duval" (musketeers) strip. The editor requested that "Henri Duval" be prepared in comic art form.

In late April of 1935, Joe sketched both "Henri Duval" and "Dr. Occult" in comic book page format and we sent the material off to "New Fun".

On June 6, 1935, publisher-editor Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson (who was a writer, himself), replied that he was enclosing a pencil sketch which had seemed to be just a piece of wrapping paper. Because Joe and I had been so short of cash, the sketches had been drawn on wrapping paper. Nicholson asked that the material be prepared in completed form for publication in the magazine. He said payment would not be much because "Fun" magazine was "primarily a catalogue of newspaper features, and our principals revenue for our comic strips is coming from the newspaper and from reprint sales rights in 5 and 10¢ stores, both of which can be very remunerative." He said that if our strips were published by him, he would be glad to sell them "on a 50/50 basis, and to include it in our syndicate and chain store sales."

This semed quite promising to Joe and me. We prepared completed pages of both "Henri Duval" and the comic book "Dr. Occult" version.

In addition, I submitted "Superman" for newspaper syndication consideration by Wheeler-Nicholson.

On July 3, 1935, Wheeler-Nicholson acknowledged receipt of "Henri Duval". He stated the strip "Superman" seemed to have possibilities; he was going to show it to his newspaper clients, and would let us know more about this later.

Again, things were looking up for "Superman". Perhaps my favorite comics

creation would finally be syndicated, and the efforts of Joe and me would finally pay off.

But again it was a case of hopes and dreams zooming way ahead of slow-moving, unco-operative reality. Months passed. Wheeler-Nicholson did not answer my letters of inquiry or send payment for "Henri Duval" and "Dr. Occult".

An obscure sage, somewhere, once said you can't pay your bills with soaring expectations. No matter how bright tomorrow might seem, you had to face the truth about today, he said. How right he was!

Our funds were low. Joe sold ice-cream bars on the street. He got a job, for a while, as a groceries delivery boy. We got to see our favorite recreation... movies ... by selling empty milk bottles to storekeepers.

Not seeing "New Fun" on the newsstands, I began to think it had gone out of business. Then, one day, I found a new issue of it on sale. Both "Henri Duval" and "Dr. Occult" were in it ... on the latter, Joe and I used the pseudonyms: Leger and Reuths, anagrams of our real names.

Joe and I were surprised and delighted, but we were also puzzled that we had heard nothing further from the publisher, and had not been been paid for this published work.

Again I wrote to Wheeler-Nicholson. On October 4, 1935 he responded, apologizing for the delay in answering my letters. He said a brand new magazine, "New Comics", was being readied for publication. He suggested to me that I prepare, for it, a four-paged strip entitled "Federal Men". A rip-roaring G-man auto-patrol strip brimming with adventure and excitement. He stated that the "Superman" comic strip was being held for an order from a syndicate. He suggested that "Superman" be published in one of his magazines. Further, he said he had pending an order for a 16-page color-tabloid in which "Superman" could be included if his company was publishing "Superman". He added, "We are beginning to pay out on the magazines

for the first time, with a starting pay of $10 per page for New FUN and $5 per page for New COMICS. This is simply a start at paying an advance on royalties as the artists receive 15% of the profits divided among them from each magazine, and receive 50% of syndicate sales and chain store sales."

Joe and I never received "15% of the profits" and "50% of chain store sales".

Joe and I were not sold on Wheeler-Nicholson and hoped to place "Superman" with what we hoped would be a more responsible organization. I asked Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson to return the "Superman" strips to me.

On October 23, 1935, "New Fun"'s Managing Editor wrote to me: "Got your card, addressed to the Major, re 'Superman' and write to advise I am shooting this back to you under separate cover tomorrow."

I continued my marketing attempts to place "Superman" with a newspaper syndicate.

Meanwhile, I wrote and sold some comic valentine verses for a small amount.

I interested a business executive of a local publishing company, in Cleveland, in attempting to get "Superman" into syndication. He felt that it had promise and he showed the "Superman" strips to some local and out-of-town newspapers, and to some newspaper syndicates. He was also interested in the possibility of syndicating it himself. But since nothing definite materialized from his efforts, I resumed the sales-pitching myself.

I slightly interested Arthur J. Lafave of Cleveland, who nationally syndicated the excellent "Napoleon" dog strip by Clifford McBride. He, too, showed "Superman" to local newspapers and a few out-of-town newspapers. He did not get a strong enough response, he said, to encourage him into taking on the syndication of the feature. But he was very friendly and encouraging.

Despite all this rythm of rising hopes followed by discouraging

let-downs, I still strongly felt that the "Superman" comic strip had considerable merit, and that I should persist in trying to place the feature.

On February 27, 1936, Swan-McDonald Features, Inc. turned down the "Superman" comic strip but suggested: "I do not think that there is a good chance to sell a continued daily story similar to 'Super Man', about one column of space to be used. You seem to be adapted to this kind of work. Let me know what you think of the idea."

I turned down this offer to get "Superman" into print as a daily textual serial. I felt that the sensational nature of the lead character's super-action made the concept a natural for the pictorial comic strip format. I preferred to continue trying to market "Superman" as a comic strip.

Meanwhile, payments from Wheeler-Nicholson were dismally slow. In fact, some material was printed for which Joe and I were never paid.

I received a check from Wheeler-Nicholson's company that bounced.

Wheeler-Nicholson's editor took some of the "Federal Men" and "Dr. Occult" pages which Joe and I had sent in, and with our permission, he published them in a publication issued by a new comic book company he became affiliated with. The titles of the strips were changed to "Federal Agent" and "Dr. Mystic".

Wheeler-Nicholson wrote to me on March 20, 1936 that "Henri Duval" was being dropped. He suggested that in its place I produce "Calling All Cars" with the subtitle "Sandy Kean and the Radio Squad". He said page rates were rising to $9.00 a page and as soon as sales warranted it, there would be additional raises. In view of the advance in rates, he was asking artists to cancel the back amounts owed them, as he only had funds available for current editions. He said a third magazine was about to be launched, the financial arrangements for which had just been settled in a conference that day. There would be additional work for me in the new magazine: "We like your work and believe that we can make a lot of money for you eventually."

Though we did not agree to cancel whatever monies were due us, Joe and I resumed doing business with Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson.

On March 13, 1936, he sent a check to me and wrote: "Do not be alarmed over the legal phraseology on the back of the checks. Our lawyers made us put it on after we had a couple of unfortunate experiences with chiselers who tried to hold us up after we'd paid them in full and the lawyers insisted that full release go on all checks. Strictly speaking, Dr. Occult belongs to you and we will release all rights to you other than first serial, any time you so desire."

I knew that releasing all rights to the creator, other than first serial rights, upon request, was the usual custom. I had read this in writers magazines. I assumed that this was the way business was done between creators of literary material and the publisher.

Nicholson added that he needed more work from me because he was putting out one or two additional magazines soon, and that one of the two projects was already being shaped up. He said it would contain longer and fewer stories than his other comics magazines. From Joe and I, he wanted a heroic detective, "Slam Bradley". Slam was to combine brains and brawn, cleverly solve difficult cases and be able to slam-bam his way out of brawls or attacks by mobs. Nicholson suggested that Slam should frequently be depicted in "a torn shirt with swelling biceps and powerful torso ala Flash Gordon".

The magazine he referred to became entitled "Detective Comics". In addition to doing "Slam Bradley" as a 13-pages per episode series, I originated another series entitled "Spy", which Joe and I also supplied to "Detective Comics".

I persisted in trying to place "Superman" as a syndicated newspaper feature. On September 9, 1936, Howard Denby of Esquire Features, Inc. wrote to me: "Thank you for submitting your daily strip entitled 'Superman,' to us. While it shows a lot of imagination, it is not the type of strip we care to sponsor. This particular continuity form seems to be passing out of vogue and strips of this nature are not selling very well now.

"May I, in passing, suggest that you pay a little more attention to actual drawing? Yours seems somewhat crude and hurried. The old gag about any kind of drawing doing for a comic strip, is also headed for the discard.

"However, we will be very glad to look at anything else you may want to offer at any time. 'Superman' is being returned to you under separate cover."

I felt differently than he did. I believed that if "Superman" went into syndication, it could become a smash hit. And I was extremely pleased with the artwork Joe had done on these sample strips. I felt that Joe had brilliantly captured in his drawings the exact spirit of what I wanted to see in the "Superman" art.

I submitted "Superman", too, to The McClure Newspaper Syndicate, which rejected it.

Joe and I were grossing $72 a month from Nicholson, which we split equally, receiving $36 apiece. In March of 1937, when we began receiving payment for "Slam Bradley" and "Spy", in addition to what we received for "Federal Men", "Dr. Occult" and "Radio Squad", the monthly income rose to $174, or $87 apiece.

Early in February of 1937 Joe and I took a short trip to New York together, staying at the YMCA.

As a precaution against organized and unorganized crime, I wore a money-belt to the big city.

While we were in New York, William Laas, Managing Editor of United Feature Syndicate told us some news that made us extremely happy. United Features Syndicate was interested in taking on "Superman"! This was the outfit which syndicated

"Tarzan" and "Li'l Abner", two of our favorite comic strips. Laas said they would run "Superman" in their "Tip Top" newsstand comic book as a try-out ... and if it did well there, United would then syndicate "Superman" to newspapers.

Our long time faith and hopes in "Superman" was finally about to be justified! We were thrilled, delighted, overjoyed. After years of evading us, fame and fortune was just around the corner ... finally! We returned to Cleveland, aglow with happy anticipation.

But our great joy turned to disappointment when Laas wrote to me on February 13, 1937 that United had given the matter of "Superman" additional consideration, but had changed their mind. They felt Joe and I could not do an outstanding job on "Superman" for "Tip Top" while we were doing "numerous other jobs for other comic magazines". United felt "Superman" needed additional development before it could be offered for syndication.

Obviously, I then wrote to United Features repeating my firm conviction that "Superman" had excellent possibilities and that United should go ahead with trying it out in "Tip Top". United responded that "Superman" was "...a rather immature piece of work. It is attractive because of its freshness and naivete, but this is likely to wear off after the feature runs for a while."

I was, of course, disappointed. But I did not agree. Joe and I were thoroughly convinced that we had a winner in "Superman". It was discouraging that our opinion seemed to be in the minority, but "Superman" was still our favorite brainchild which we felt had a big hit potential.

I had early in February also submitted the "Superman" daily strips to The Ledger Syndicate, of Philadelphia, for proposed newspaper syndication, and in a lette of March 2, 1937, a staff member replied: "Your letter of February 11 to

Mr. Kearney has come to my attention in regard to your proposed strip feature 'Superman'.

"We have considered your work carefully from egery angle and I am sorry our decision can not be more favorable. Frankly, we feel that editors and the public have had their fill for the time being of interplanetary and superhuman subjects. It would not therefore be worth our while to produce a strip in this already overburdened field. I am returning your photostats herewith."

Another day, another rejection.

On March 16, 1937, Wheeler-Nicholson wrote to me that it had been nice to meet Joe and me when we visited New York. He said that "Detective Comics" was selling well and seemed to have a good future. He revealed he was planning a fourth magazine. He wrote that the Merwil Company which was associated with him on "Detective Comics", published "Don Winslow of the Navy" and "Lone Ranger", which had poor sales in comparison to the sales of "Detective Comics", which Merwil Company distributed through their affiliated Independent News Company.

Again I attempted to collect money owed to Joe and me for the comic book material we were supplying to Wheeler-Nicholson. He wrote to me on August 3, 1937 that he would try to get us some money that week but that he could not secure funds from his associates until completed work reached him; he urged me to rush some drawings to him.

At one time, I had submitted some features, including "Superman" to M. C. Gaines who was handling "Popular Comics" for Dell Publishing Company.

On November 30, 1936, M. C. Gaines, Mgr. Commercial Dept., of The McClure Newspaper Syndicate wrote to me that some time ago I sent them samples of a number of features I was working on, some of which I later sold to Nicholson. Gaines said McClure was printing Nicholson's books and had occasion each month to examine closely the material I was supplying to Nicholson. He stated that McClure was planning a proposed weekly eight-paged tabloid, and that they desired several good features along the lines of Slam Bradley. They wanted fast moving

action stories, such as mysteries, westerns, G-men material and perhaps something along the lines of "Buck Rogers" or "Flash Gordon". If I already had something ready of that nature, he asked that I send it to McClure for consideration. If not, he wanted to know how soon I could prepare such material and said that "we should be able to get together on a worthwhile proposition".

Years later, M. C. Gaines sent me a copy of the letter which I sent to him on December 1, 1937 in response to his letter to me of November 30, 1937. I wrote: "Thank you for your Air Mail Special Delivery letter with its welcome news. Shuster and I would be pleased to turn out the material you require.

"What price per page are you offering? Please mention a definite price in your

(continued on next sheet)

answering letter so that valuable time will not be wasted in negotiating over prices. And please make your price per page attractive enough so that such negotiations will be unnecessary."

Oh, how badly I needed an agent!

The letter continued: "You say twice as many panels per page as we now carry in Slam Bradley. Recently we have been carrying four panels to the page. That would mean eight panels per page is what you require. If I am mistaken on this score, please correct me.

"Please send me the dimensions that you want the comic pages drawn. Naturally, we do not already have material drawn up in page size, since we have no idea what page dimensions you require.

"We can handle any amount of work that you offer. In addition to Shuster, I work with other excellent comic artists and can furnish you with any number of desired features and pages.

"As for the work, I have several excellent, outstanding strips in mind along the action comic lines you desire. SUPERMAN is one of them. Let me know how many weekly features you want and how many pages each comic is to be.

"Since you have seen my work appearing regularly for the last several years, you know that I can be trusted to turn out work of a good calliber. For this reason, may I suggest that you permit me to prepare the strips without first wasting time by submitting to you the ideas for them. I will make each strip different from the other and along any line you desire; I guarantee you that the leading character of each separate strip will be all that you can desire. We will save very much time this way, yet I will guarantee you work of just as high a quality as had you had an opportunity to negotiate and select what strips you wanted over a long period of time.

"Will you pay promptly upon arrival of drawings? — Exactly what are the complete details of the proposition, and what are the full terms that you are offering?

"I am prepared to start work on the pages the moment you mention dimensions and prices."

Meanwhile, for several months, Joe and I had not received payment from Wheeler-Nicholson for the comic strips we were supplying to him. We were very worried about income not coming in for the work we were producing.

In reference to this, I received two letters dated December 1, 1937.

Wheeler-Nicholson wrote that he had just had a conference with "my partners in Detective Comics, Harry Donenfeld and his general manager, Jack Liebowitz". He said a total of six hundred dollars was owed to me on "Detective Comics" alone "and Harry Donenfeld is open to paying you this immediately for Detective Comics (of which I am half owner with him) but, like any good business man, he demands some security on continuation of the features. In other words he wants assurance that you will continue these for a year or two and wishes some sort of a contract with you assuring that. I would advise that you give him this contract for Detective Comics immediately and get the back stuff due you."

He promised about the balance owed Joe and me by Nicholson Publishing Company, that payment would be forthcoming in the months ahead.

The second letter dated December 1, 1937, was from J. S. Liebowitz of Detective Comics, Inc. As a result of receiving those letters, I went to New York alone and met Liebowitz, Donenfeld, and Gaines, too, for the first time. Donenfeld and Liebowitz gave me a contract which was to be signed by Joe and me. In addition, I signed a copy of that contract there in their office. The employment period was to be "for a period of two years, commencing with December 4, 1937 and terminating December 3, 1939."

This contract caused Joe and me difficulties later. I do not wish to go into detail regarding such matters, as Joe and I are now on good terms with the present owners and publishers of "Superman" and we do not want to reopen old wounds.

During this meeting with Liebowitz, he told me Detective Comics, Inc. was going to issue a new comic strip magazine consisting of action comics. He suggested that I submit material to him for this contemplated new magazine. I said I would.

The letter of December 6, 1937 which I wrote to Liebowitz was as follows:

"The contract was mailed on yesterday; letter and pages will be mailed on to Nicholson tomorrow. Since we do 10 pages per month for Nicholson magazines, we are

to receive $90 for the... -- Herewith find enclosed suggested characters for ...CTION COMICS.

" I. (Adventure)

13 color pages - BOB HAZARD, World-Wide Adventurer

" Bob Hazard scraps his way around the world, a-la Slam Bradley, seeking fortunes, buried cities, helping others out of difficulties, foiling schemers; he battles at the slightest provocation and is irresistible with the girls. Each story complete in thirteen pages.

" II. (Western)

6 black and white pages -- THE CRIMSON HORSEMAN

" 'The Crimson Horseman' is a masked, cloaked rider of mystery who metes out grim justice in a lawless cattle country where the law is openly flouted. This will feature the usual western hokum but led by a more than ordinarily colorful character. The story will be run serially in installments of six pages.

" III. (Detective)

26 color pages -- THE WRAITH

" This will present a most unusual detective. Due to abnormal glands all of his five senses are acute to a hypersensitive degree: he hears thru walls; can locate and follow scents like a bloodhound; his eyes possess the range of a powerful telescope; and, quite conveniently, he possess the strength of a dozen men. He tracks down criminals like a prowling beast - is called 'The Wraith' because he comes and goes as mysteriously as a ghost - frightens criminals half out of their wits because they believe him to be not of this world. He is not connected with any police force but solves whatever crimes come before his attention only because he is an avenging demon toward those flouting the law. -- For proof that a detective strip of this nature would be popular, note the success of 'The Shadow', 'The Phantom Detective', etc. Each release will be twentysix pages, complete, and unusual. The length of the complete-novel cartoon can be played up as a feature that no other cartoon magazine possesses.

" IV. (Sport)

6 black and white pages -- CHESTY CRANE: Crack(ed) Athlete

" Chesty, an all-around athlete, is boisterous, boastful, but simple and goodhearted. He is continually getting into fight situations because of his big-talk but usually comes out on top thru either his fine athletic ability or a break of luck. Each six page installment of this serial will abound with humor and sport-action.

" V. (Science-Fiction)

13 color pages -- STREAK MARVEL

" Streak Marvel is a scientific genius whose sensational discoveries lead this athletic young scientist into action-adventures in every branch of science-fiction. I have in mind for this strip a splendid cartoonist who has devoted his art work to drawings almost exclusively of a pseudo-scientific nature, who at present resides in Virginia. Each thirteen-paged release of this strip will be complete in itself.

.....

"The magazine ACTION COMICS, would contain a well-balanced list of features: adventure, western, detective, sport and science fiction. Five strips in all. Each reader won't have finished reading the strip almost before he has begun. The amount of color pages, and black and white pages, have been planned to follow the color-arrangement now being used in DETECTIVE COMICS -- Let me know which of the above outlined strips sound worthy of development, to you; if you approve the number of pages I have allotted for each individual strip, and which strips if any you desire to have me replace with other ideas. All the pages will average eight panels per page.

"Awaiting your prompt reply. I will act just as swiftly in preparing these features as you will permit."

Obviously, after "Superman" was launched into print, I later incorporated into "Superman" some of the super-power gimmicks I had in mind for the proposed "The Wraith"

comic strip. Comic book fans may notice that my concept of "The Wraith" was submitted by me in 1937, long preceding the publication of "The Batman".

J. S. Liebowitz replied to me in a letter dated December 9, 1937 that inasmuch as they were considering possibly using some of the other features which I had brought along with me "last Saturday", that I cut the number of pages and have my artists start pencil sketching each feature at once.

I believe Liebowitz's reference to the "other features you brought along with you last Saturday" refers to various features, including "Superman" which I had turned over to Gaines for consideration by McClure Syndicate.

I was in contact with several cartoonists and after I wrote the scripts, I had them work up sample artwork on the proposed features.

Liebowitz wrote his letter on the letterhead of Merwil Publishing Company, Inc., a company apparently controlled by Harry Donenfeld.

In later years, a transcript of my letter of December 16, 1937 to Gaines of McClure Syndicate came to my attention: "Please find enclosed herewith under separate cover 12 releases of the strip 'Snoopy And Smiley'. *** I'm sending this along so that you'll have some idea of what Shuster and I can do along the line of comic art. I'd appreciate it if you let Mr. Liebowitz get a look at the strip.

"What is your decision regarding all that material I left with you? Please return whatever you find unsuitable. ***

"I presume Mr. Liebowitz is showing you the material I'm preparing with various different artists for ACTION COMICS. Consider that material, also, for your tabloid comic Sunday section.

"I'm very glad to say that Shuster is having no difficulty turning out the eight-panel pages ...and would be glad to furnish the art for a tabloid comic strip such as you seek.

"Hoping you'll offer me a definite assignment and proposition ... soon. - I'm in contact with some excellent artists and can supply you with any amount of comic strips. Am willing, too, to cooperate on speculation."

On January 5, 1938 Liebowitz wrote to me (through an error, his secretary incorrectly dated the letter January 5, 1937) that the Nicholson Publishing Company had been petitioned into bankruptcy by its creditors, but he expected things would work out satisfactorily for the contributors to Nicholson's publications and that publication of those magazines would by some manner of means continue. He said if the creditors took over the magazines, they would no doubt pay my back account. He advised me to continue producing the art for those magazines so there would be no delay when the magazines started up again. He said that "Detective Comics" was not part of the Nicholson Publishing Company, though the art heretofore had been purchased from Nicholson. He said payments would thereafter come from Liebowitz's office and that Mr. Sullivan, formerly with Nicholson Publishing Company, would remain in editorial charge of "Detective Comics" and that I would work directly with Sullivan. He made reference to my not having been paid for the "Detective Comics" March art, but that payment for the April art, submitted to Liebowitz's office, would be paid for at once upon arrival. He looked forward to receiving from me the proposed features for the contemplated new magazine.

After that, I received a telephone call early in January of 1938 from Gaines of the McClure Syndicate. This was a three-way telephone call between Gaines, Liebowitz and myself. Gaines informed me that the syndicate was unable to use the various strips which I had sent [redacted] for inclusion in the proposed syndicate newspaper tabloid. He asked my permission to turn these features, including "Superman", over to Detective Comics' publishers for consideration for their proposed new magazine, "Action Comics". I consented.

On January 10, Vin Sullivan wrote to me that Nicholson Publishing Company was in the hands of receivers, that "Fun" and "Adventure Comics" was suspended for the present, and that "Detective Comics" was being published by the firm for which Liebowitz was the business manager.

Sullivan stated that of the various features I sent to Liebowitz in connection with the new publication, "The one feature I liked best, and the one that seems to fit into the proposed schedule, is that 'Superman'."

He asked if Joe could, in addition to the other features he was doing, turn out 13 pages of "Superman". He added, "Joe, of course, seems to have the proper touch in putting your stories on drawing paper, and if it were humanly possible I'd like to have him turn out this 'Superman' for the new magazine. *** Please let me know immediately whether or not he can do this extra feature *** enlighten me on Joe's capability of doing 13 pages of 'Superman'."

Joe and I had been offering "Superman" around for years ... we loved it ... we thought its potential for great commercial success was fantastic. However, if we had merely wanted to see "Superman" published, we could have allowed Wheeler-Nicholson to publish "Superman" when he had written to me that he wanted to publish it. If I was merely anxious to see "Superman" in print, I could have accepted the offer of Swan-McDonald Features to serialize it in text form, for syndication to newspapers. But now Joe and I thought the situation was different. And so we decided to permit our favorite comic strip brain-child "Superman" ... in which we had such tremendous faith ... to be published in "Action Comics".

In response to Sullivan's letter, I suggested that Joe draw six and/or five panels per comic book page.

In his letter dated January 12th, Vin Sullivan responded they were pressuring the artists to increase the output to eight panels per page. He suggested that perhaps Joe could drop the features Joe was drawing for "Fun" and "Adventure Comics" and concentrate on "Detective Comics" and "Action Comics", "Thus, with the 17 pages he's doing for 'Detective' could be added, let us say, a 13 page SUPERMAN feature for the new mag. How does that sound?" He also said some of the other artists I had in mind could draw up a few panels of other strip ideas of mine such as "Zador", "Captain Peril" and "Sir Gallant". Sullivan added, about a suggestion of mine, "That idea of having those other fellows pencil in their work and then have Joe ink in over it might work out ... why not give it a try and see how the stuff looks?"

Vin Sullivan's next letter was dated January 31st. He wrote, "I'm holding all these pages you have submitted pending the big conference which will take place sometime this week concerning the 'Action Comics' magazine. Meanwhile, I would suggest that you prepare to start the SUPERMAN almost immediately, 13 pages you know."

Sullivan wrote to me on February 1st, "I'm enclosing under separate cover the daily strip of SUPERMAN.

"Start in immediately on the thirteen (13) page feature of SUPERMAN for the new Action Comics Magazine. I'd like to have the pages here in the office in about three weeks time, if possible."

Joe and I took the daily strips of "Superman", which were drawn in newspaper style format, cut up the panels and pasted them into comic book page form. We added a couple or so original drawings.

Joe and I did not strictly obey the 8-panels-per-page instructions. There had been some sensational double-sized and even triple-sized drawings in the daily strips and we didn't want to destroy their startling effectiveness by trimming them too severely.

Vin Sullivan's next letter was dated February 4th, and he requested that the 13 pages of "Superman" reach his office within three weeks.

I received a letter from Gaines of McClure Newspaper Syndicate dated February 9, 1938 advising me that all the drawings which I had submitted to him were now in the hands of Sullivan. Gaines wrote, "My understanding is that they are going ahead with the new publication 'Action Comics', and in that publication they are making use of your 'Superman' strip, and perhaps some of the others." He said McClure had run into a snag concerning the proposed eight-page tabloid but that if the tabloid came to life again, he would get in touch with me in reference to it.

In his next letter to me of February 16th, Vin Sullivan informed me that "Fun" and "Adventure Comics" had been acquired by the company now publishing "Detective Comics". He wrote, "I'm anxious to see how the SUPERMAN strip shapes up, according to last letter, I whould be receiving it any day now."

Sullivan's next letter to me was dated February 22nd: "Ilm enclosing a silverprint of the cover of Action Comics. You'll note that we already used one of those panel drawings of SUPERMAN, as you suggested in your recent letter. For the time being, SUPERMAN is the only feature of yours that will appear in the new magazine."He said "Dr. Occult" was being dropped from "Fun". He asked if I could supply scripts for other characters now appearing in their magazines.

A couple large promotional panel-drawings had several years earlier been prepared by Joe and me to illustrate Superman in action; these were shown by Joe and me to syndicate editors to demonstrate the impact and appeal of the feature. At my suggestion, Sullivan selected one of them and used it for the now very famous cover for "Action Comics" No. 1, June, 1938 issue. Joe and I received $6.00 for it; $3.00 apience. This cover has been frequently reprinted.

J. S. Liebowitz sent me a letter dated March 1, 1938, which included payment for the first episode of "Superman" which was to be published in "Action Comics" No. 1. He wrote, "I am enclosing a form of release for your feature entitled 'Superman', which is scheduled for our new book ACTION COMICS. Will you please have same signed by yourself and Mr. Schuster and return to us. As soon as we can get ourselves adjusted, I will prepare releases for all your features now appearing in our magazines. I have no knowledge of what releases you may have signed for Major Nicholson and as long as we have taken over these magazines, we would like them conducted in a more business-like manner. Therefore, I think you will agree that releases are necessary. I think these magazines properly managed can grow and the artists will be in a position to better themselves."

The legal release, which Joe and I signed, caused us much grief later.

We were paid $130 for 13 pages of "Superman" at $10 per page, which Joe and I split equally between us.

Vin Sullivan notified me on March 14th that if I wrote script for their other features, I would be paid $1 per page. "We have just so much money to spend on the production of each magazine, and to go over this sum is poor judgement and bad business on our part. *** So for the time being, the price of $1 per page is our limit..."

I thought that for me to accept only $1 per page for comics script would be poor judgement and bad business on my part, and so I refused Detective Comics, Inc.'s offer to script additional comics for them at $1 per page.

I continued attempting to break into newspaper syndication. On April 8, 1938, an employee in the Business Department of The McClure Newspaper Syndicate wrote to me asking if I would be agreeable to working out two weeks' of "Superman" newspaper strips at no obligation to them: "You should get a letter from the publisher of these magazines before we can get down to brass tacks on SUPERMAN." He was referring to "Action Comics". He added, "The early panels describing the birth of SUPERMAN and how he came to this planet could well be expanded into several weeks' releases, we think."

On April 13, 1938 he suggested that I submit the two-weeks' sample releases of SUPERMAN around July 1st.

I wrote a detailed two weeks "Superman" daily strip continuity account of Superman's origin on the planet Krypton; how his father and mother placed their infant child in a rocket ship and sent him to Earth, moments before Krypton exploded. And how, upon reaching Earth, the infant was rescued from the flaming space craft and grew up to become crusading SUPERMAN.

I sent the script to McClure Syndicate. On April 21, 1938, McClure responded that they preferred waiting until July 1: "Enclosed we return your continuity for your safe-keeping. Thank you for your energetic cooperation."

I knew that periodical publishers often returned to contributors,

upon request, the rights other than first serial rights. Wheeler-Nicholson had written to me that this was our arrangement. I wrote to Liebowitz that I had a newspaper syndicate interested in syndicating "Superman", and I requested that newspaper syndication rights to "Superman" be returned to Joe and me.

In his letter to me dated June 9, 1938, Liebowitz replied, "While it is not our intention to hold you back in any way from a possible newspaper syndication of 'Superman', we are not in a position to give you what you ask for, that is a complete release. If and when a syndicate makes a definite offer for the use of 'Superman', we can get together so that all of us will benefit."

On June 13, 1938, M. C. Gaines of McClure wrote to me that since I had already completed the first two weeks of the SUPERMAN strip, I should now send the material to him. "I will take this matter up at the first opportunity and let you know what we decide to do."

Joe did a terrific art job of illustrating my script for these two weeks of the daily "Superman" strip. I mailed the strips to McClure Syndicate.

Chas. E. Lounsbury of The Register and Tribune Syndicate wrote to me on August 10, 1938 in response to my letter of August 26, "*** We are impressed with your outline and especially your enthusiastic approach. *** We read with interest the optional two weeks' releases. They do strike us as exciting and original." He noted I had a proposal elsewhere, and said they could not give me a quick decision. But if I was still in the clear after Labor Day, they would be glad to hear from me.

On September 7, 1938, he again wrote that "such matters necessarily move rather slowly here. *** Personally I like SUPERMAN very much and believe that with a few changes it has very good possibilities." He stated that if McClure Syndicate was in a position to take on the strip, he presumed I would go ahead. I informed Liebowitz of these developments.

In early September, Liebowitz asked me to come to New York to discuss the matter of McClure's interest in syndicating "Superman".

I went there, and Liebowitz had me go see his attorney about a rough draft of the Detective Comics, Inc. agreement.

Among other things, the Detective contract stated: "This agreement shall be for a period of five years from the date hereof and shall thereafter be continued for an additional five years at our option. However, if at any time the art and continuity of any feature shall not be up to the standard required for the magazines, we at our option, then may terminate this agreement as to and substitute other artists for the unsatisfactory feature or features."

When the McClure contract was offered for signature, Liebowitz wrote to me in his letter of September 28, 1938: "As I have pointed out to you many times, our company has very little to gain in a monetary sense from the syndication of this material. Also bear in mind, that we own the feature 'Superman' and that we can at any time replace you in the drawing of that feature and that without our consent this feature would not be syndicated and therefore you would be the loser in the entire transaction. *** Please give the entire matter your serious thought. It is entirely up to you and Joe, whether you wish our pleasant relationship to continue and whether you wish the strip 'Superman' to be syndicated."

The deal for newspaper syndication of "Superman" was signed.

For years and years, I had struggled, despite many discouragements, to put over my favorite idea, a "Superman" comic strip. I tried to sell newspaper syndicate versions of "Superman", first with O'Mealia, then with Keaton. Later, I collaborated with Joe on what I felt was a new and better version of a proposed "Superman" newspaper syndication comic strip.

After those long years of severe discouragement and of perseverance, "Superman" was published, became a hit with the public, caused the comic book industry to surge and become big-time, and "Superman" was launched into newspaper syndication. What was yet to come? Success on radio? On television? In the movies? In character merchandising?

The long-time dream and aspiration of Joe and myself had finally come true.

Ironically, after "Superman" had been in syndication a while, I received a letter from Henry M. Snevily of The Bell Syndicate, dated October 16, 1939... he had turned down the opportunity of syndicating "Superman" to be drawn by O'Mealia, and Bell had also rejected the "Superman" version drawn by Joe Shuster. He inquired: "Without knowing what your present set-up is on SUPERMAN, I am writing to see if the situation is such that we might work out something to our advantage. *** We have noticed the strip SUPERMAN, like it and believe it has large possibilities. You sent us a strip once but I do not remember seeing this one."

And on November 13, 1939, another major syndicate which had rejected "Superman" several years earlier, wrote to me, "If you are in New York at any time we should be glad to have a chat with you. Many thanks."

Now they wanted "Superman".

Now.

****

Chapter Five

MY FRIEND SUPERMAN

When I first originated the "Superman" comic strip, I wanted to do a fantasy adventure strip, but I knew it was important to come up with a new angle. The adventures of "Buck Rogers" occurred in the future, and in outer space... "Flash Gordon" battled incredible menaces on the planet Mongo ... "Tarzan"'s adventures took place in the jungle. It occurred to me, why not have a comics hero's astounding adventures take place right here on Earth ... in cities similar to those we are familiar with. He would battle the type of wrongs we read about in our daily newspapers. He would use his magnificent abilities to help ordinary people like you and me. I figured a lot of people could identify with that.

I thought I would pull a switch, do something "different" in "Superman". Most fiction heroes were constantly being harassed by villains, and their perils would grow worse and worse. This was what kept the reader intensely interested. I thought, since Superman is so incredibly powerful, I'll reverse the usual fiction formula. Instead of a beleaguered hero constantly trying to survive menaces, I had Superman do the chasing, and he constantly had the bad guys on the run. But I learned that if things are too easy for a hero, that can sabotage the suspense of a story ... and so I had Superman hounded by super-villains such as Luthor, the mad scientist.

In the early days when Joe and I were producing comics which were being published, I would hurriedly walk over to his apartment, every day, sit down and start writing script for what he was to draw that day. I didn't send plots or scripts to editors, first. Usually, I did not know what would be happening in the story the next day. Yet I knew that the comics had to be very lively and inventive ... that a lot of fun and action should be going on.

As a result, there was a lot of spontaneity in the material. I found myself in a position similar to that of the comics reader, as I wrote the sequences ... I did not know what would appeer in the following panels, except I was confident it would be exciting and fun to read.

After "Superman" became successful, this changed. I was told to send plots to the editorial department, and after editors made comments and suggestions, I wrote the completed scripts. Perhaps something of additional worth emerged from this alteration in the procedure of producing the comics, but I felt regimented ... I missed the days when one of the reasons I wrote comics was for the sheer fun of it.

While I was still a high school student, it occcurred to me that Joe and I could copyright "Superman" in our names by running some of its first daily strips in the school newspaper. I didn't follow through with this. Years later, I was surprised to see that such a procedure was a plot gimmick of Frank Gruber's book, "The Mighty Blockhead".

When "Superman" was new, I sometimes posed for Joe to demonstrate certain figure-positions of Superman that I had in mind for the character. In addition, Joe often looked into a mirror while trying to decide what expression to give the comics character he was drawing. I watched in awe. Joe could twist his features into such an amazing variety of expressions that I felt he belonged up on a stage, rather than toiling at a drawing board.

Sometimes I got plot ideas or incidents from my own misfortunes. Once, at the 1940 New York World's Fair, I got gypped by a sly character running a concession. I incoporated a take-off on the incident into a

story I wrote, and in that circuitous manner got back some of the money I had been cheated out of by the wily concessionaire.

I remember another incident which happened at the New York World's Fair. They had a "Superman Day" event, there. I was amused to learn that the actor who was to portray "Superman", and be paraded around atop a float, was having last minute qualms. He was worried that as he was being displayed as "Superman", some rotten kids might test the actor's invulnerability by throwing rocks at him.

Any really interesting superhero needs fascinating foes to dynamically oppose. The more formidable and wily the villain, the greater the hero's mental and physical abilities must be to outwit and defeat the crafty foe. Well, Superman had villains galore to combat: mad scientists and their fiendish robots, etc. However, let's face it. Continuous derring-do can not only get repetitious, but day after day and year after year it might even get into a rut. And so, for a change of pace, I created Mr. Mxyztplk, the mischevious imp from another dimension. Mxyztplk's mission in life was to discombobulate the Man of steel with magical opposition and make the existence of super-powerful Superman as humorously miserable as possible. I made Mxyztplk a very [redacted] looney, [redacted] and since Superman was already something of an international institution, I think it added something to the feature to show Superman tangling with a magical foe who enjoyed making the idol of millions, uncomfortable on his super-pedestal. Personally, I pronounced the character's name: "Mix-zix-pulk".

When I was separated from "Superman" in 1948, I no longer guided the direction the feature took. Had I continued writing the scripts, as originator

of "Superman", who knows what new villains I might have invented, and what additional directions the further development of the feature might have taken.

Some other strips I originated and wrote for Detective Comics, Inc. were "Robotman" and "The Spectre". I enjoyed the Spectre because he was even more far-out than Superman. I also wrote "The Star-Spangled Kid". For Gaines, I wrote the first two episodes of "Red, White and Blue".

Between 1959 and 1966, I began writing very many "Superman Family" scripts again, as a free-lance writer, without a credit-line, and at a fraction of the rates I had formerly received. At that time, I wrote many "Superman", "Superboy", "Supergirl", "Lois Lane", and "Jimmy Olsen" stories for the various "Superman Family" magazines. In addition, I wrote a "Bizarro" series, and a number of "Legion of Super-Hero" stories. I created a number of the lead characters in the latter series, including Triplicate Girl, Chameleon Boy, Colossal Boy, Ultra Boy, Shrinking Violet, Sun Boy and Bouncing Boy.

I did much of the writing during that period under the guidance of Mort Weisinger, who was the editor of "Superman", at that time. I feel that Mort played an important role in helping keep "Superman" alive and successful for so many years. Mort was a very hard worker and had many unique ideas.

Of all the many hundreds of "Superman" stories I have written, I have some special favorities. The origin story of "Superman", published in "Action Comics" No. 1, heads the list. Also, the two weeks introductory story, which appeared in newspaper, about Superman's origin on Krypton and how he was sent to Earth as an infant.

I also enjoyed writing a short "Superman" episode which appeared years ago in "Look Magazine"; in the tale, I had the Man of Steel grab Hitler and Stalin and yank them over to the League of Nations for judgement. That got Joe and me denounced by the official newspaper of Hitler's Elite Guard, who commented that Joe and I were Jewish.

I had fun writing the first Mxyztplk story... later, the spelling of the imp's name was changed to "Myxzptlk".

Another favorite of mine is a dailies newspaper story I wrote about horribly inhibited Eustace Walson, and how Superman helped him win the girl that Eustace secretly worshipped.

Among the many stories I enjoyed writing, which did not carry my by-line, was "The Death of Superman" and "Superman's Return to Krypton". I also enjoyed writing some of the "Imaginary Tales" about Superman"s "imaginary" marriage to Lois Lane. Some unusual tales I wrote were about Lois' imaginary marriage to Luthor, and Luthor's imaginary marriage to Superman's mother before Superman was born.

A favorite of mine was the Superman 2-page text short story I wrote which was published in Superman Magazine No. 1. Also, I wrote the 2-page Superman text story in Superman Magazine No. 2. I wrote text stories in Superman Magazines Nos. 3 & 4 under the pseudonyms "Hugh Langley" and "Bert Lexington".

Many things influenced my creation of "Superman". For me, the originator of the character, to try to recall the influences after so many years is something like trying to put together a jig-saw puzzle, because even I may not be able to recall all of the things which influenced me.

influences

Obviously, Samson and Hercules had a strong influence -- in fact, the cover of Superman Magazine No. 4 shows Superman tearing down some pillars ... a feat first accomplished way back in biblical times by a certain long-haired, mighty muscled fellow whose name Samson, like Superman's, began with the letter "S".

In 1911, one of my favorite authors, Edgar Rice Burroughs, wrote a book-length manuscript, "Dejah Thoris, Princess of Mars". It was published serially in All-Story magazine, and entitled "Under the Moons of Mars".

This occurred before I was born in 1914.

It was published as a book, "A Princess of Mars", in 1917.

As a teenager, I read and enjoyed the book immensely. On Mars, the book's heroic protagonist John Carter could leap great distances, and had mighty strength. Since Mars was smaller than Earth, and its gravity was less than Earth's, Carter's Earth-muscles enabled him to accomplish awesome deeds of strength on Mars, feats it would have been physically impossible for him to perform on Earth.

The "Superman" I created came from the distant planet Krypton whose inhabitants, through the process of evolution, were much further developed than the people of Earth. I conceived the planet Krypton as being populated by superhumans. In the "Superman" two weeks origin story which was syndicated by McClure Newspaper Syndicate (it was produced by Joe and me back in 1938) Superman's father Jor-L is depicted as running at super-speed and taking a tremendous leap up to the top of a building. In another early daily strip panel, both Jor-L and his wife Lora are depicted leaping through the sky, and she is carrying her infant child Kal-L (who later grows up on Earth to

become Superman). The name Jor-L was an anagram of my name: Jerome Siegel.

In the first issue of SUPERMAN Magazine, published in 1939, there appeared a one-paged "Scientific Explanation of SUPERMAN's Amazing Strength--!" The first picture on the page shows superman inhabitants of the planet Krypton leaping through the sky over their city. I also explained on that page that because Earth was smaller than Krypton from which Superman had come, that Earth's lesser gravity helped Superman to be fantastically strong.

It had occurred to me, that just as John Carter was mighty on Mars, because Mars was smaller than Earth, that if the planet of Superman's origin, Krypton, were much larger than Earth, that the difference in gravity would enable Superman to be super-powerful on Earth.

I had read and enjoyed Philip Wylie's book "The Gladiator". It influenced me, too.

And, like millions of others, I enjoyed the cartooned adventures of Elzie Segar's Popeye, including the animated cartoons about Popeye produced by Max Fleisher. Popeye performed incredible feats of super-strength. This influenced me, also.

I had read with fascination, such exciting pulp magazines as "Doc Savage" and "The Shadow". Some pulp magazines starred colorful heroes who crusaded against crime and evil, and some of them had dual-identities. In movies, I had seen "The Scarlet Pimpernel", "The Mark of Zorro" and Rudolph Valentino in "The Eagle", and I thought that a mighty hero, who in another identity pretended to be an ineffectual weakling, made for great dramatic contrast. In addition, it would, in a comic strip, permit some humorous characterization and plot situations.

One of the most appealing things about Superman, is his flying through the air. Visually, it looks attractive and exciting. If Superman was not

frequently streaking through the air, he would lose a great deal of his drama and appeal. It certainly is more interesting to look at, than at a picture of someone walking, or even running, down a street.

People for many centuries have wanted to fly ... to escape from being merely earthbound. So many of us have had "flying dreams" ... I know I did, and occasionally still do.

After "Superman" had been published a while, some critics said he was a one-man gestapo. I always intended Superman to be a force for good, to zoom in and aid people in distress with flashing fists and other super-powers. I know that if I were in peril, I would be very pleased if Superman were to flash in and help me.

We can't have a cop on every street corner so it is comforting to think how nice it would be to have a costumed crusader streak in and exercise his expertise to squelch lawlessness. It is only a fiction story, and until our world is absolutely perfect and free of crime and injustice and wrongdoing, people will enjoy such escapism.

Anyone is free to produce his own version of any theme. I believed the superman theme could make a terrific adventure comic strip. I felt that the super-action scenes would have tremendous visual impact. I was fortunate that Joe Shuster, with whom I collaborated on the "Superman" comics version which became published, could so outstandingly artistically deliniate the super-power scenes I visualized. I think we made a very good team, and Joe's art contribution to "Superman" was exactly what I hoped for.

Other artists have carried on the art deliniation of "Superman" which Joe initially portrayed. I believe Joe's early work was inspired.

Into my version of the "Superman" theme, I injected elements which I felt

would give the feature universal appeal.

"Superman" used his awesome powers to crusade dramatically for worthy causes and in behalf of people who desperately needed his aid. He had compassion and "heart". He could have become the worst tyrant the world has ever known; but since he has good character, he uses his incredible abilities benignly.

He could have operated solely in the guise of "Superman". I had him pretend to be "meek, mild" reporter Clark Kent ... because drama is heightened by strong contrast. It was amusing to have the mightiest man on Earth pretend to be cowardly. Clark Kent sumbolized the very average guy, who is anything but super-heroic... and "Superman" of course represents what the plain ordinary, crushed-by-reality person would like to be ... but can only be in his wistful day-dreams, because we are what we are, and the vast majority of us are not, in real life, like the fabulous heroes of escapism-fiction.

The most fun I had in writing the strip was when Superman easily did the impossible and defeated incredible odds. I vastly enjoyed, in my mind's eye, seeing the deeds which readers would later thrill to when they saw it picturized on the printed page.

And I smiled inwardly when Lois poured her scorn on poor, befuddled Clark, because I knew, just as the reader knew, that Lois would later moon romantically over Superman.

All this must had touched a universal chord... otherwise, how else can the long-running success of "Superman" be explained?

Nowadays, many writers and artists carry on the adventures of "Superman". They are much better paid than when Joe and I struggled to launch and develop "Superman".

Joe and I were willing to gamble because we had faith in "Superman". But we

concentrated so much on what we were creating that we gave little thought about protecting ourselves and our heirs, in the event "Superman" became the tremendous hit we were confident it would become. We just couldn't conceive, while creating and developing "Superman" that anyone would ever try to downgrade our contribution.

We didn't realize that it is not enough to create a hit. You must also protect your interests as its originator.

he's squashing his anger- chin tone due to circumstances w/ DC/Lieber

It has been said that the "Superman" comic strip has changed greatly through the years, since it was originated by Joe Shuster and me.

Has it really?

Superman still is a being from another world who uses his super-powers, including super-strength, here on Earth to crusade against evil. When not attired in his famous colorful Superman costume, he masquerades in his secret identity of Clark Kent. He is still admired by reporter Lois Lane, who does not know that he is secretly Clark Kent. Superman still wears his costume. Clark Kent still wears glasses he really doesn't need.

All the above was in the concept I dreamt up in the early 1930s, and it still appears in the comic strip today. This is the very guts, the backbone of the "Superman" concept.

I am of the opinion that if the owners of "Superman" were to hire the world's greatest artists, the universe's greatest literary geniuses, the cosmos' most brilliant editors and told them to produce the "Superman" comic strip wihout using those integral elements, that the property would suffer severely.

Should Clark Kent no longer pretend to be meek and mild, but instead be very macho?

That could be done via editorial surgery. But then, he would be like

practically every other hero in existence, including many of his imitators, and dramatic contrast would be junked. In the process, Superman might lose his sense of humor and become hopelessly dull.

I think Superman's greatest challenge is that he has been published for forty years ... his super-deeds are now known to millions everywhere and do not elicit the same utter amazement that greeted his awesome deeds in his early years. And during most of those years, many competing super-heroes have striven to emulate not only his impact, but his sales, and have inundated the public with a veritable avalanche of super-deeds.

It is not only natural, but a stark necessity, for the people who work on "Superman" today to do all they can to keep Superman exciting and a delight to his fans.

I think that what helps keep Superman in there doing his super-thing is that new generations of youngsters keep coming along, and apparently the initial concept was so powerful that each new generation, encountering problems and difficulties of various kinds in their own lives, keep thinking, "If only I had the super-powers of a superman, I could surmount anything and everything and life would be wonderful..."

Many years ago, dime novels flourished for a while. Their heroes valorously fought breath-taking dangers. Then the dime novels died. The comic book industry has flourished a lot longer.

Perhaps, if super-heroes had not caught the public's fancy, comic books might have become as extinct as the dinosaur, years ago.

You helped make the comic book industry in America big-time, Superman! May you and your super-hero comrades keep the industry thriving for a long time to come!

****

Chapter Six

TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Much has been printed about the origination of "Superman", and its early production, which is not accurate.

In Steranko's "History of the Comics", Volume One, Jim Steranko reprinted a 1934 magazine ad for "Doc Savage" and he stated the name "Superman" could have been inspired by the advertisement.

However, the first issue of the Doc Savage magazine was dated March, 1933.

My "Reign of the Superman" story was published two months earlier, in January, 1933.

Steranko suggests as my source for the concept of a man from another planet having great powers on Earth, John W. Campbell's "Aaron Munro" stories. I never read those stories.

In the same article, Steranko states I reviewed "The Gladiator" in my "Science Fiction" fanzine. This claim has been repeated by others in various books and articles purporting to relate how I created "Superman". But I have seen all five issues of the "Science Fiction" fanzine which were published, and I did not find the purported "Gladiator" review in any of them, and I recall no such review. I asked a couple of the writers who published this claim, to send me a copy of the review, if it really existed. None of them has obliged.

In Jim Steamko's "History of the Comics", Volume Two, on page 28, Steranko states that Captain Marvel, Jr. existed years before "Superboy" and served as its model.

Captain Marvel, Jr. first appeared in Whiz Comics, No. 25, December, 1941 issue.

However, months earlier, in the June 21, 1941 issue of The Saturday Evening Post article on "Superman" entitled, "Up, Up and Awa-a-y!", the article stated on page 78:

"Messers. Shuster and Siegel are now in the throes of creating another comic strip.

"It will be called Superboy and confine itself to Superman's adolesence, when his supermuscles - the mind recoils from the possibilities - were employed in practical jokes.

"'It will be,' Siegel explains, 'about Superman before he developed a social conscience."

I think Steranko's two volumes on "History of the Comics" are excellent and I very much enjoyed reading them. I like Jim Steranko and his work, but feel I owe it to "Superman" fans to correct any mistakes.

The writer of the Introduction to the book "SUPERMAN FROM THE 30'S TO THE 70'S" asks where Superman's costume came from: "From the Phantom?" And the book "COMIX, A History of Comics Books in America" states that the Phantom's costume and secret identity "manifested two of the essential features which would make comic books a vigorous and independent industry within two years." Jim Harmon's "Nostalgic Catalogue" states in reference to Superman, "In his skintight acrobat's costume, he was preceded by Lee Falk's comic strip hero, The Phantom." The book, "The Great Movie Serials" by Jim Harmon and Donald F. Glut states, "...The Phantom came before Superman, and that strip owes something to The Phantom..."

Joe and I prepared our "Superman" comic strip collaboration in late 1934, and immediately began submitting it to potential markets.

"The Phantom" was first published in 1936.

The book, "The Golden Age of Comics Books" repeats some of the errors about

the origination of "Superman" which had appeared elsewhere, including in "History of the Comic Books".

The book, "COMIX, A History of Comic Books in America", on page 12, after describing the plot of "Lois Lane, Superwoman" which is reprinted in the book, states in reference to this story, "The cleverness of the plot reflects a trend away from the vigorous simplicity of its originators, Siegel and Shuster, who having supplied the most powerful single conception in the history of comic books, actually produced only a comparative handful of the stories, although their names continued to appear on title pages like this one."

The story and art of the reprinted "Lois Lane, Superwoman" was written by me and drawn by Joe.

Did I produce only a compartive handful of the stories?

I wrote all the Superman comic book stories and Superman newspaper strip stories from 1938, until I went into the army in mid-1943, and Joe and his staff supplied the art. (Only several stories were ghosted prior to my imminent entry into the armed services.) While I was in the army, practically all of the Superman stories were ghosted. When I came out of the army in 1946, I began scripting Superman again, until problems arose because of "SUPERBOY" which had been submitted by me for consideration before I went into the army. Later, between 1959 and 1966, I wrote a great deal of "Superman Family" stories, as well as writing the Superman newspaper strip, without by-lines.

This was considerable material. Not just a mere "handful" of stories.

Both "SUPERMAN FROM THE 30'S TO THE 70'S" and the "Comic Book Price Guide" No. 7 state Superman magazine No. 1 contains pages omitted from the Action Comics No. 1 origin story. The truth is that the additional pages were specifically created for use in Superman Magazine No. 1.

In Steranko's "History of the Comics", Volume One, the author states that

The Saturday Evening Post reported the gross earnings of Joe and I in 1940 to be $75,000.

Our gross earnings, from all the various features we produced in 1940, including "Superman", was $38,293.39, considerably less than $75,000.

In addition, according to my records, of the $38,293.39, of that amount $21,252.39 was shared 50-50 by Joe and me from the newspaper syndication of "Superman". From comic book work, Joe and I derived ~~about~~ $8520 apiece. By then, "Superman" was a phenomenal success as a comic book publishing property.

In 1938, when "Superman" first became a smash hit, Joe and I received $630 for the "Superman" material we produced for our creation, which we shared.

The book, "Secret Origins of the Super Heroes" states M. C. Gaines of McClure Syndicate had his assistant "cut and paste the newspaper format strips into a continuous thirteen-page story, and rearrange the origin continuity to make it a one-page introduction."

The truth is that Joe and I cut up our "Superman" daily strips and pasted them to fashion the 13-pages of comic book "Superman" material which was published in Action Comics #1.

The 1973 book "The Gospel According to Superman" gives an account about the origination of "Superman" by "two students in an eastern university" which is not true. Joe and I never went to college, and the purported discussion which supposedly led to the creation of "Superman", as described in the book, never occurred.

"The World Encyclopedia of Comics" states about me: "But many industry observers find it strange that none of his later creations have ever been successful over long periods."

"Superboy" has been published for many years. I originated it.

Perhaps other erroneous information, which I never saw, has also been published about me.

If I did not write this autobiographical book of recollections about how "Superman" was originated and became a success after much persistence and tribulation, people will keep on reading false information about me and Superman and believe it, because the misinformation has been so wide-spread and has been repeated again and again.

****

Chapter Seven

Such Problems

I wrote the Superman stories with considerable enthusiasm.

Motivating many of the stories, was a great sympathy for the underdog. I had never had much money when I originated "Superman", and at that time newspaper articles told of injustices, some movies related tales concerning social problems, there was a Depression on, jews and others were being persecuted and murdered by Nazi Germany, colorful pulp magazine heroes grimly crusaded against men of evil. This strongly influenced me. I had Superman use his mighty super-powers to fight crime and aid the helpless and the downtrodden. As I wrote more and more "Superman" stories, I began to give Supermen more super powers, such as his burrowing underground, as I got additional inspirations.

I injected fantastic super-action into the stories, but sometimes combined it with humor. The dual-identity of the main character, and the relationship of both Superman and his other-self Clark Kent with Lois Lane, made for interesting situations. Lois had a love-hate relationship with the main character. She was romantically intrigued by daring Superman, and completely turned off by meek, mild Clark Kent.

Though Superman fought astounding menaces, I had him equally interested in helping ordinary people, including society's outcasts. In the eyes and mind and heart of Supermen, the problems of a penniless tramp or other troubled soul was important. Wealth meant nothing to a super-being who could have acquired all the riches on Earth for himself if he did not have high ideals. Superman sympathized with, and fought for justice and happiness for, the common man.

I had read an article, some time earlier, in Vanity Fair magazine,

about the great success Stephen Slesinger achieved in merchandising and licensing the Tarzan character to manufacturers, etc. I felt that "Superman", too, could be similarly exploited and I wrote about this in one of the early "Superman" magazine stories.

Later, what I had suggested in that "Superman" episode occurred in real life, as Superman was licensed so that his likeness appeared on toys, games, etc.

When the "Superman" Sunday newspaper strip was about to be launched, both Liebowitz and Gaines told me that an artist other than Joe should draw it. They thought that Joe was too busy to handle the additional chore. I refused to go along with this. I said Joe could handle the assignment, with his staff.

Many imitations of "Superman" began appearing because of "Superman"'s success. I was surprised.

I felt at the time ... the imitators can copy or produce variations of Superman's appearance and super-feats ... they can ape the things I had Superman do ...

... But Superman is what he is because of my life experiences, my compassion for the downtrodden and those in need.

Soon after "Superman" was published, I got married. As time went on, I wrote more and more stories about my fabulous creation. I wrote, wrote, wrote no matter how I felt. There were more and more deadlines to be met.

Like theatrical performers who sometimes have to smile and look jolly when inwardly they feel anything but euphoric, I found myself writing about terrific super-deeds, even if sometimes I felt like I could barely drag myself to the typewriter.

But I was young and nervous and ambitious and eager to put my visual

imaginings down on paper and so, I'd psyche myself into a state of exaltation ... and after I felt really way up there, then I'd enjoy it.

Fly, Superman, fly!

Smash through obstacles ... astound the universe ... clobber wrongos as only you can!

Mentally, I'd be up, up and awa-a-ay. Sometimes I would type so fast that I would look at my hands in a very detached way, watching the fingers flash across the typewriter keys ... wondering ... "Am I writing this, or is some other force or being doing this scripting? Has my subconscious mind taken over?"

At times it seemed like the stories were writing themselves.

How did I first learn about "Superman"'s early success?

I remember an early visit to the offices of Detective Comics, Inc., publishers of "Superman". An editor asked me to step into a storeroom. He said he had something to show me.

It was a scrapbook.

He told me that "Superman" had been clicking in a big way, and that the scrapbook contained news clippings about the success of "Superman". I read news story interviews in the scrapbook in which Harry Donenfeld, publisher of "Superman", exulted over the huge sales of "Superman".

Probably a little open-mouthed, I glanced at article after article in the scrapbook.

I remember being summoned to Detective Comics, Inc., in New York, perhaps in 1939. Victor Fox's publishing company had issued "Wonder Comics", and the lead character in the comic book, "Wonderman", imitated "Superman" in appearance and deeds.

I testified at the trial. The defense attorney tried to infer that Superman's costume was copied from the costume of "The Phantom". I responded that "Superman" had been drawn up and submitted to newspaper syndicates very long before "The Phantom" first appeared in print.

Detective Comics, Inc. won the lawsuit, and the publication of "Wonderman" was stopped.

During that trial, the defense mentioned that sometimes Superman performed like a super-powered vigilante ... such as when he wrecked the autos of hit-and-run motorists, etc.

After that, I had Superman perform his super deeds in a more law-abiding manner.

Much later, when a newspaper story reported that a child had been injured by jumping from a window while he was pretending to be Superman, I had Superman comment from time-to-time in the comic strip that only Superman could perform such deeds, unharmed.

Joe and I became separated from "Superman" in 1948 because of certain problems.

The purpose of this book is to relate how the comic strip "Superman" was born, and how, after years of discouragement and persistent effort, it finally appeared and became successful. And so I will not go into the complexities of those problems, and into the difficulties Joe and I, and my wife Joanne and daughter Laura, experienced for many years, as a result of this.

In late 1975, the plight of Joe and I became known via the media. Joe and I are very grateful not only to the media, but for the support we received from cartoonist organizations, the public, and especially cartoonists Neal Adams and Jerry Robinson.

We are grateful, too, to Warner Communications, Inc., which now owns "Superman", and especially to executive Jay Emmett who handled negotiations in this matter for the conglomerate. Joe and I were given $20,000 apiece annually for life by Warner Communications, and our names are now back on "Superman", as originators of "Superman". We are on friendly terms with Warner Communications, Inc., and with Jenette Kahn, Publisher, and Sol Harrison, President, of DC Comics Inc., their subsidiary company which publishes "Superman".

Joe and I are very happy to be associated with our "Superman" creation again.

The Depression is long gone. It is fortyseven years since I wrote "The Reign of the Superman". It is fortysix years since Joe and I created "The Superman" comic book which was never published. It is fortyfive years since I worked on proposed "Superman" comics versions with artists Leo E. O'Mealia and Russell Keaton which were abandoned. It is fortyfive years since Joe and I co-created the daily strip version of "Superman" which, years later, was published in comic book format in "Action Comics". It is fortyone years since "Superman" was first published in "Action Comics" No. 1, and became very successful.

Joe and I often think about the amazing fiction character we created when we were teenagers, a character which has come to our aid now that we are in our 60s.

And we remember how it all happened.

****